THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Iconoclast Imperial Authority and its Contested Legacy

From the Arab Siege (717/18) until the Death of Michael III (867)

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that no part of it has been submitted in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference, the work presented is entirely my own.

Date: 31 January 2020.

Signature: ……

Majci Radmili Marić
i za uspomenu na oca,
Љубодрага Марића (1954-2016)

For my mother Radmila Marić
and to the memory of my father,
Ljubodrag Marić (1954-2016)

Za Baticu, Laru i Hanu

Za Brudersa Lesu, Pavlišu, i Jecu

And to all undertaking the anxiety-inducing endeavour of doing a PhD in humanities, in a world where the leading universities are foremost large businesses. Especially to all those not coming from the United States/United Kingdom & Commonwealth/European Union, who are forced to invest additional time and energy into proving they are persons 'of good character', a task both humiliating and expensive, which is rather unfair considering these students are more likely to be in a financially disadvantageous position

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Abstract

The thesis studies the first two iconoclast Byzantine emperors, Leo III (r. 717-41) and his son Constantine V (r. 741-75), and their highly-contested legacy. It first revisits the evidence for the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V, their policies and ideology, highlighting the aspects that made them powerful models of imperial authority and dynastic longevity that continued to be followed and imitated by successive emperors well into the ninth century, and those that contributed to their overall popularity among the Constantinopolitan citizens. The evidence suggests that the imperial authority, which had crumbled over the decades prior to Leo's ascension, began recovering in the wake of the successful defense of Constantinople during the second Arab siege in 717-718. The Byzantine imperial authority then reached new heights during Constantine's long reign, which allowed for the record of his and his father's achievements to become deeply embedded in social memory of the capital. In the minds of the many, these emperors' political and military success and their relative longevity in the office were interpreted as signs of divine grace, leading to the conclusion that their iconoclastic theological position must also be correct. The last chapter of the thesis traces the legacy of Leo and Constantine through historiography, hagiography, and material culture. It becomes clear that they remained popular figures, and the memory of their success came to the fore in the context of a protracted crisis of legitimacy exacerbated by a series of humiliating defeats suffered by the Bulgarians in the early ninth century (806-13). This period saw a competition of memory between partisans of iconoclasm and their iconophile opponents, yet, the more vicious polemic against Leo and Constantine that began emerging in this period shows no signs of early circulation, suggesting that it did not have the time and space to manifest itself inside the capital publicly. Moreover, the positive memory of the Isaurian rulers received the second wind from the top of the state with the revival of iconoclasm in 815 and remained relatively intact in Constantinople at least until the death of the last iconoclast emperor Theophilos (829-42). Further evidence of public discourse in the early years after Theophilos' death reveals notable silence about any emperor, and it is argued that the extraordinary case of public humiliation of Constantine V's remains (c. 866-7) was the earliest public condemnation of an iconoclast ruler.

Lay Summary

The Byzantine emperors Leo III (717–41) and, especially, his son Constantine V (741–75) became two of the most hated figures in Byzantine history, primarily because the doctrine they instituted as orthodoxy, Iconoclasm, was eventually rejected and proclaimed a heresy. However, scholars have long since recognized that both were highly successful and popular rulers who contributed greatly to the empire's survival in times of severe crisis. Almost four decades after Constantine V's death, when the empire was suffering a series of defeats, this popular devotion manifested itself at the tomb of Constantine V, where a group of retired soldiers prayed and begged the emperor to rise from the dead and save the empire. Another five decades later, the authorities felt compelled to exhume Constantine's body from the very same tomb and publicly humiliate it in a mock-trial at the Hippodrome. This thesis first revisits the evidence for the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V, outlining the aspects that made them figures admired by later emperors and the populace of at least Constantinople, if not the wider empire; it then traces their highly-contested legacy in the c. one hundred years after Constantine V's death, and finally touches on the lasting influence of their memory on Byzantine culture into the second half of the ninth century.

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Abbreviations

ACO	*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, Series Secunda. Volumen Tertium. Concilium universale Nicaenum secundum,* III.1-3, ed. E. Lamberz (Berlin, 2008-2016)
De Cer.	*Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae libri duo,* ed. J.J. Reiske, CSHB Bonn, 1829–1830.
DOC 1	*Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, 1: Anastasius I to Maurice (491-602),* 1-2, eds. A.R. Bellinger and P. Grierson, (Washington DC, 1966, 2nd print. 1992)
DOC 2	*Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, 2: Phocas to Theodosius III (602-717)*, 1-2, ed. Philip Grierson, (Washington DC, 1968)
DOC 3	*Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, 3: Leo III to Nicephorus III (717-1081)*, 1-2, ed. Philip Grierson, (Washington DC, 1973)
DOS 6	*Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, 6: Emperors, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Addenda*, eds. John Nesbit and Cecile Morisson, (Washington DC, 2009)
Ekloge	*Ecloga Basilicorum,* ed. L. Burgmann. Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte, 15. (Frankfurt a. M., 1988)
Łewond	*Łewond Vardapet, Discours Historique*, Armenian text ed. A. Hakobian, French translation and commentary B. Martin-Hisard. Armenian text and translation of Letter of Leo to ‘Umar by J.-P. Mahé, CNRS, Monographies 49. (Paris, 2015)

Nikephoros	*Nicephorus, patriarch of Constantinople. Short History*, text, English translation and commentary by C. Mango, CFHB, 13; DOT, 10. (Washington DC, 1990)
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1-3, ed. A.P. Każdan et. al. (Oxford-New York, 1991)
PmbZ	*Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, zweite abteilung (867-1025)*, (Berlin, 2009-2013)
SynaxCP	*Synaxarion Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae,* ed. H. Delehaye, *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels, 1902)
Theophanes	*Theophanis Cronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883, 1885); *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, English translation by C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997)
Trullo	*The Council of Trullo Revisited*, eds. G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone, English translation by Featherstone (Rome, 1995): 41-187.
VC	*Eusebius, Life of Constantine, edited by F. Winkelmann, Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin, Eusebius Werke, I.1 (Berlin, 1975).*
ZV	*Zacos V., and A. Veglery, Byzantine Lead Seals, I-III (Basel, 1972)*

Introduction

Definition of the topic and survey of previous scholarship

The Iconoclast emperors Leo III (717–41) and especially his son Constantine V (741–75) became two of the most hated figures in Byzantine history; in Magdalino's assessment Constantine is 'the most reviled emperor in Byzantine literature'[1]. Yet, as scholars have long since recognized, both were highly successful and popular rulers who contributed greatly to the empire's survival.[2] The scattered traces of positive attitudes towards these two first rulers of the Isaurian dynasty (717–96) reveal that they suffered one of the worst, or, from another perspective, the most successful *damnationes memoriae* in Byzantine history. Moreover, the vicious polemics against Leo and Constantine continued for almost a century after Constantine's death. One reason is clear, of course; the doctrine they proclaimed as orthodoxy, Iconoclasm, was eventually rejected and proclaimed heresy. Yet other rulers were branded as heretics too, and their memories did not suffer as much. In the late ninth-century (c. 895), Niketas Paphlagon could say about Emperor Theophilos (829–42), the last Iconoclast on the throne (and a highly active one at that) that 'it is said that he was in other respects not a wicked man but in fact an upholder of fair judgements', before inevitably proceeding to condemn Theophilos for being an Iconoclast.[3] Such a positive nuance was never expressed in the polemics against Leo and Constantine, in fact, in c. 866, not long before the text just quoted was composed, the remains of Constantine V had been removed from his tomb and humiliated in a mock-trial at the Hippodrome.[4] On the other hand, in 813, when the empire suffered defeats at the hands of the Bulgarians, soldiers performed a *presbeia* at the very same tomb of Constantine, begging him to rise from the dead and save the empire,[5] and not long after, Iconoclasm was reinstituted. In this, the lasting positive memory of Leo III and Constantine V among the populace of Constantinople played a considerable role.

As fascinating as this discrepancy is, there is to date no study dedicated to the legacy of the first two Isaurian rulers. The majority of works on this period or specifically on Leo and Constantine either focus on the religious aspect, or do not look long past their

[1] Magdalino 2007a, 4.
[2] Bury 1889, 401–69. Lombard 1902.
[3] *Life of Ignatios*, §8, 10, tr. Smithies, 11.
[4] See the detailed treatment of this event in Ch. 3, sub-heading 'Disinterment of Constantine V'.
[5] See the treatment in Ch. 3, sub-heading 'The "Bulgarian crisis" (811–13) and pro-Constantine V incidents'.

own time.[6] Moreover, even the more general works on Iconoclasm rarely go past 843, which may be the most uncritically accepted watershed date in Byzantine scholarship.[7] Gilbert Dagron gave us one of the best assessments of the ideological repercussions of Iconoclasm, with characteristic focus on the relationship between the imperial and patriarchal offices, of course.[8] His study, however, takes a long duree approach and operates on a very high ideological level; more importantly, he is largely uninterested in the ninth-century Iconoclasm and entirely skips the period between the termination of Iconoclasm in 843, and the assassination of Michael III in 867. The works of Marie-France Auzépy offer excellent treatments of various aspects of Leo III's and especially Constantine V's policies and ideology,[9] but she is far less interested in the ninth-century Iconoclast rulers, or in the question of memory of Leo III and Constantine V.[10] The most recent study of the Iconoclast period undertaken by Brubaker and Haldon, which offers the most comprehensive modern treatment of its socio-economic aspects and political history, equally puts much more focus on the eighth century, and completely ignores the early post-Iconoclast period.[11] Finally, Ilse Rochow provides a very useful volume on Constantine V, summarizing his reign and collecting the available evidence about the emperor well beyond his death, but, true to its aim, her study mostly stops at presenting the sources.[12]

In my thesis, I first revisit the evidence for the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V, their policies and ideology, outlining the aspects that made them figures admired by later emperors and the populace of Constantinople at least; I then trace their highly-contested legacy in the c. one hundred years after Constantine V's death, and examine the lasting influence of their memory on Byzantine culture into the second half of the ninth century. The chronological boundaries of the study, as stated in its title, are the second

[6] Some notable examples include Gero, 1973, and id. 1977. Speck 1990 offers an exhaustive treatment of the legend against Constantine V that portrays the emperor as selling his soul to the devil in order to retake the capital in 743 and attempts to penetrate the stratigraphy of the text down to its mid-eighth century layer. See the following notes for further examples.

[7] Recently, Brubaker and Haldon 2001, and 2011, nominally placed 850 as their end date, but they did not include a proper treatment even of the termination of Iconoclasm in 843, with little over three pages (447–52) dedicated to this problematic moment.

[8] Dagron 2003, 158–91.

[9] Auzépy 2008 is by far the best introduction to the period. Ead. 1981 is an excellent analysis of the portrayal of Constantine V in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*; ead. 1999 a seminal study of the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, following her 1997 edition of the same text with extensive commentary. Ead. 2001 treats the attitudes of the Isaurians towards the sacred space and relics; ead. 2003, advances an exciting hypothesis that the model for some of the miniatures in the famous Khludov Psalter, produced in Constantinople in c. 843–50, was in fact an Iconoclast psalter; ead. 2004b covers key aspects of Iconoclast policies and Ideology.

[10] See, however, two important studies that go deeper into the ninth century, although focusing on the patriarchal propaganda: Auzépy 1990 challenged the historicity of the supposed removal of the image of Christ under Leo III in 726 and ead. 1998b examined the propaganda promoting the Constantinopolitan patriarchate.

[11] Thus, the eighth-century Iconoclasm is treated in close to two hundred pages (Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 69–247), while the ninth century receives approximately half the space (366–452). On socio-economic aspects, see ibid., 453–771.

[12] Rochow 1994.

Arab siege of Constantinople in 717/18, and the beginning of Emperor Basil I's reign. The Arab siege was a pivotal moment for the Byzantines and the origins of the Isaurian dynasty and does not need further justification. I have chosen 867 as my end-date for several reasons. First, as I argue, it was probably in this year, or shortly before, that the disinterment and humiliation of Constantine V's remains took place – the earliest public condemnation of any Iconoclast ruler in Constantinople, as I argue. Second, Basil I was the progenitor of the next important dynasty that ruled the Byzantine empire, which eventually replaced the Isaurians as the model of dynastic longevity. Moreover, Basil I and his advisers initiated the next legal programme, outspokenly so to replace the *Ekloge* of the Isaurians.[13] Further, as Magdalino stressed, Basil also began severing the ties with the circus factions,[14] which was a marked change compared to the policy of Constantine V and Theophilos. Finally, Basil was the first ruler since Constantine V to be acclaimed as a 'New Constantine',[15] which symbolically announced a new cycle of 'imperial renewal'.[16]

The surviving sources as a very 'distorting mirror':
Implications of the *damnatio memoriae* of the iconoclast emperors

The near-unprecedented success of the *damnatio memoriae* against the Isaurian emperors, leaves every historian working on the Iconoclast controversy faced with the issue of the state of the literary sources, which are at once meagre, exceptionally one-sided, polemical, and almost always distorted by some spin, chronological displacement, and sometimes outright fabrications; as Brubaker and Haldon correctly observe: '[i]t is exceedingly difficult to appreciate the history of the period from the reign of Leo III to that of the "final" restoration of images in 843 without falling under the spell of the iconophile sources and the propagandistic picture they present'.[17] Thus, the surviving sources present the historian with a number of restrictions; he is forced to rely on scattered and faint traces of positive memory, preserved largely in non-Byzantine sources,[18] and often to work with *argumenta e silentio* and inferences from context, sometimes by seeking to 'invert' the surviving iconophile condemnations (*psogoi*) of the leading Iconoclasts.[19]

[13] Humphreys 2015, 244–8.
[14] Magdalino 2015, 178.
[15] Mansi XVI, 185.
[16] On the concept of 'New Constantines' in Byzantium, see Magdalino 1994.
[17] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 402.
[18] The best collection of this evidence is still Gero 1973 on Leo III, and id. 1977 on Constantine V.
[19] Magdalino 2007a, 5, notes that inverting a *psogos* can be a risky heuristic method, but considering the state of the sources this kind of venture is slightly more justified in the case of the Isaurian dynasty, as already Auzépy 2002, 88, remarked.

In order to help mitigate the problematic state of the literary evidence, but also to better reconstruct the context, I draw on a variety of texts often overlooked in scholarship, such as: the *Brussels Chronicle* or the chronicle by Peter of Alexandria, which contain valuable details on Constantine V unattested in other sources;[20] the so-called *Oracles of Leo the Wise*, the first six of which were composed for Leo V, and contain rare pro-Iconoclast testimony;[21] or the Armenian history of Łewond, which seems to contain a lost Iconoclast *Synaxis* for 15 August describing the triumphant procession commemorating the Arab retreat in 718.[22] Furthermore, I opt for an interdisciplinary approach that draws on both written sources and visual and material evidence. The primary non-textual evidence employed are seals and coins, investigated comparatively, as important contemporary material evidence immune from the distortions and the tempering so ubiquitous in the literary sources.[23]

My pool of sources extends further to the few surviving images executed in important public spaces – such as the cross in the apse of the church of Hagia Eirene – and those surviving in a less public setting, like the so-called marginal psalters,[24] and other material objects like small finds, and silk fragments.[25]

Remarks on Method

The overarching methodology that informs the following pages is discourse analysis, which is best suited to offer a means of integrating different and disparate sources into a coherent analysis, especially as the notion of discourse nowadays extends 'beyond the confines of language to imagery and broader social practices and phenomena'.[26] *Statements*, defined as 'utterances which have an effect', are recognized as the 'most fundamental building blocks' of discourse,[27] and must belong 'to a discoursive formation', as defined by Foucault,[28] the most influential thinker in the theory of discourse.[29] Following Foucault's work, it has been established that the discourse is 'always in dialogue with

[20] See Ch. 2, n. 505. and Ch. 3, n. 1367.
[21] Brokkaar 2002.
[22] See the detailed treatment in Ch. 1, Triumphal commemorative procession (15 August).
[23] Morrisson 1987, is a rare study that looks at methodology of the two media in parallel. For sigillography alone, see Cheynet 2008. For numismatics in general, see Grierson 1975, id. 2001, and Morrisson 1992. For methodology on numismatics alone, see old but still useful Grierson 1967, and especially Füeg 2007, 151-65. For coinage as vehicle of propaganda, see more generally Jowett and O'Donell 2012, 51-8, and for Byzantium, Penna 2002, Morrisson 2013, and Marić 2018.
[24] On the 'marginal psalters', see especially Corrigan 1992. See also Ševčenko 1975, and Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 43–7, with additional references.
[25] Muthesius 1997. Walker 2012, 20-37.
[26] Quote at Jambeck 2010, 1492.
[27] Quotes from Mills 1997, 17. See also Jambeck 2010, 1493.
[28] Foucault 2002, 130.
[29] See for example Foucault 1981, and id. 2002.

the other position'.[30] This property is particularly suitable for a situation in which the historian is practically left with one side of the dialogue only. Thus, one of the approaches in this thesis is to identify statements which were meant 'to have an effect'; in order to do so I pay particular attention to the level of publicity that the statement in question aimed at or achieved at first (or subsequent) utterance or (initial) dissemination.

Regarding the analysis of important public events transmitted in texts only, Buc rightly warns us of the 'dangers of ritual'.[31] Ultimately, a historian can never be sure if a public act preserved in a text took place in the very form that the textual source describes. The main strategy of countering and minimizing this problem is to base discourse analysis as much as possible on source criticism, examining any given case against as broad a canvas of contemporary texts as possible, and still further against the broadest possible chronological context and evidence for existing traditions, best described by Foucault as follows:

> history does not consider an event without defining the series of which it is part, without specifying the mode of analysis from which the series derives, without seeking to find out the regularity of phenomena and the limits of probability of their emergence, without inquiring into the variations, bends and angles of the graph, without wanting to determine the conditions on which they depend.[32]

This lends further justification, if needed, to the decision of including visual material, where possible, in this broad context; although the meaning of a message conveyed through an image still needs to be decoded through texts,[33] we can at least be sure (in most cases) that we are looking at an unadulterated piece of evidence.

Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into three chapters that are arranged in chronological order. The first two look at the reigns of Leo III and his son Constantine V, focusing on aspects that contributed to their popularity in their own time and afterwards, and thus made them attractive models of imperial rule and authority, while the third examines the contested legacy of these two iconoclast rulers in the following c. 90 years (775–867). I here offer a brief outline of these three chapters.

Chapter One. Numerous scholars have reached the conclusion that the empire's major concern during Leo III's reign was survival: to defend the empire from the aggressive

[30] Mills 1997, 14.
[31] Buc 2001.
[32] Foucault 1981, 68.
[33] On interaction between text and image in the period under scrutiny, see Corrigan 1992, Brubaker 1989, and ead. 1999.

assaults of the caliphate by means of military tactics and strategy, and by securing divine favour.[34] Especially the latter concern was behind the beginnings of Iconoclasm in Byzantium. Following the eruption of Thera in 726, that was considered a spectacular manifestation of divine wrath, the emperor and his advisers identified the inappropriate veneration of holy images (considered idolatrous) as the likely cause of this wrath, leading to the first act of 'imperial Iconoclasm'. This probably took the form of an imperial decree in 730.[35] The same goal – securing salvation and resisting the enemies – is professed in the proem of Leo's law-code, the *Ekloge*, issued in the last year of his reign (741) and promulgated jointly with his heir, Constantine V.[36] Therefore, this existential crisis of both empire and morale constituted the major factor shaping Leo's reign. Starting from this premise, Chapter One first looks briefly at the historical background of Leo's reign, focusing on religious polemic and ideological competition between the Byzantine empire and the caliphate in the last decade of the seventh century, before moving on to the renewed Arab assaults in the early eighth century that climaxed with the siege of Constantinople in 717/18. Taking the siege as the pivotal moment of the period, which provided also the context in which Leo ascended the throne, I look at how the new emperor established his legitimacy, how his imperial ideology developed, and the role the siege played in this process. I argue that the emperor and his advisers consciously capitalised on the victory in 718 for the remainder of Leo's reign, especially through various commemorative acts that focused on and expanded the cult of the cross and thus of the emperor. This helped establish Leo's legitimacy on the one hand, and restore imperial authority that had crumbled over the decades prior to Leo's reign on the other.

Chapter Two. Constantine V's reign can be divided into two periods.[37] The first period (741–c. 750) is characterised by a series of very serious challenges to Constantine's

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[34] Gero 1973, 34–43, 44–7, 150–2; Crone 1980, 59–73; Auzépy 2008, 254–5, 265–6, 279–82; Howard-Johnston 2010, 510–12; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 78–9; Humphreys 2015, 100–5, 249–69.

[35] The traditionally established chronology sets the beginnings of Iconoclasm between 726 and 730, in which Emperor Leo III had supposedly issued an edict against icon-veneration asking the patriarch Germanos and the pope Gregory II to endorse his position; both rejected it and this led to Germanos' deposition. See Gero 1973, 94–112; Herrin 1987, 307–43; Auzépy 2008, 279–82. This interpretation was challenged by Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 79–127 with references, who largely rely on Speck's hypothesis for their revised interpretation (esp. ibid., 105, n. 117). While there is hardly any scholar today that would disagree with the more general conclusion by Brubaker and Haldon that Leo III was not the kind of iconoclast that later iconophile sources claim that he was (155), many reject their re-interpretation and re-dating of the initial stages of Iconoclasm under Leo III, which is probably the weakest attempt at revision in Brubaker and Haldon's book. See the comments by Krausmüller 2012, and 2015, 151; Boeck 2013; Louth 2013; Rhodes 2013. See especially Dell'Acqua and Gantner 2019, who draw attention to additional evidence for an early reaction against Leo III's Iconoclasm in Italy (overlooked by Brubaker and Haldon), which also challenges Speck's hypotheseis. I am grateful to Dr Thomas Brown for drawing my attention to this article.

[36] *Ekloge*, prooimion, 87–95. See the conclusions by Gero 1973, 48–58; Crone 1980, 71–3; Humphreys 2015, 100–5. On the dating of the *Ekloge*, Burgmann 1983, 10–12.

[37] On Constantine see PmbZ #3703. Lombard 1902 is largely outdated, but offers occasional useful observations. Gero 1977, is the best work for the evidence on Constantine preserved in the oriental sources. Speck 1990, is an exhaustive analysis of the legends against Constantine V, portraying the emperor selling his soul to the devil. Rochow 1994, offers an excellent overview of Constantine V's reign and the sources. Auzépy 1981, analyzes the portrait of Constantine V in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*; ead. 2002, focuses on the legend of Constantine slaying a dragon; ead. 2004b, advances a hypothesis of an Iconoclast psalter as the model for the famous Khludov

rule, which was particularly devastating for Constantinople: first, the civil war with Artabasdos, Leo III's former ally and general of the Opsikion, during which Constantine lost the capital and was forced to besiege it for a little over a year (c. September 742–2 November 743), causing a famine inside the city.[38] Second, the last outbreak of the plague at the end of the long late antiquity which decimated the population for a full year (746/7).[39] During the second period (c. 750–75), Constantine managed to revive the ailing capital and his imperial authority at the same time: by celebrating two triumphs against external enemies, purging idolatry, and, indeed, slaying a 'dragon'.

In the chapter, I focus on those aspects that made Constantine a successful ruler and an attractive imperial model, whose positive memory endured for more than two generations despite the subsequent hostile polemics and reversal of his religious policy, which proclaimed Iconoclasm a heresy. The chapter is organized around the traditional categories following the prescriptions for a *basilikos logos*. I begin with 'noble birth', examining whether Constantine's birth just before the Arab retreat (15 August 718) could have played any role in the enduring image of Constantine as a triumphant ruler, and then look at how Constantine relied on his father's memory for legitimacy. In 'Deeds of war', I look at Constantine's military achievements against external enemies, the Arabs and especially the Bulgarians, and the manner in which these were advertised to the population of Constantinople. I conclude the heading with several measures pertaining to military organization which played a role in maintaining Constantine's positive memory. 'Deeds of peace' is divided into three major subheadings covering religious policy, imperial justice, and civil measures and building achievements inside Constantinople. 'Religious zeal' analyzes the role the emperor played in convening the council in Hiereia in 754, that institutionalized Iconoclasm as the official doctrine of the orthodox church. I examine the ideology pertaining to the role of the emperor displayed in the *Horos* ('Definition') of the council and propose that the core idea derives from the proem of the abovementioned *Ekloge*. In the next section pertaining to imperial justice, I analyze the recorded cases of public displays of violence among which, the treatment of the former patriarch Constantine II was particularly ruthless.[40] The cases suggest that this violence was justified through the strict application of imperial law, which is given emphasis not attested for rulers that came before or after Constantine. In the last section, I briefly

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Psalter, which might have included a triumphant image of Constantine V. Finally, Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 156–247, analyze in detail the emperor's Iconoclast policy, but also offer a useful survey of the material evidence from the period of his reign.

[38] Nikephoros, §§64–6; Theophanes, 414–21. For an exhaustive treatment of Artabasdos' reign, see Speck 1981, especially 19–77. See also Rochow 1990, 21–9, and PmbZ #632.

[39] Turner 1990a.

[40] Nikephoros §67; Theophanes, 423-4.

summarize the measures undertaken to restore and revive Constantinople, and conclude by examining at length a curious legend tied to the restoration of the aqueduct that has the emperor slay a dragon. Besides portraying Constantine as a protector and saviour of the city, I further propose that the legends around his achievement brought the emperor into the proximity of and in competition with saintly figures.

Chapter Three. The period between the death of Constantine V (775) and reign of Leo V (813–20), witnessed a vicious power-struggle between Empress Eirene – the widow of Leo IV (r. 775–780), Constantine V's son and heir – and her own son, Constantine VI. The period was also characterized by a protracted crisis of legitimacy and military unrest, and it saw the doctrinal policy of the empire reversed twice; in the council of Nikaia 787, which terminated Iconoclasm, and in 815, which reconfirmed the decisions of the council of Hiereia in 754.[41] In the early ninth century (c. 806–13), the Bulgarians inflicted a series of humiliating defeats on the Byzantines, most prominently in 811, when the emperor Nikephoros I fell in battle.[42] The crisis brought the memory of the Isaurians, especially of Constantine V to the fore, and the new emperor Leo V instituted the return to Iconoclasm. Leo's murderer and successor Michael II (r. 820–29) maintained the Iconoclast policy, but only to the degree that he resisted pressure from iconophile ecclesiastic figures for a reversal and that he permitted the veneration of icons, even if only outside the capital, but his son Theophilos (829–42) became more zealous.[43] One year after the death of Theophilos, the final termination of Iconoclasm took place; the sources for this event, however, are exceptionally problematic and offer only a very few points of consensus.[44] In any case, the evidence suggests that the authorities were hesitant and slow to advertise the change.

I begin the chapter by looking at cases which testify to the lasting political value of the Isaurian dynasty in the capital; the failed (786) and successful (787) attempt at the reversal of Iconoclasm, and an unprecedented six coup-attempts over thirty-six years (776–812) in which the five surviving sons of Emperor Constantine V were advanced as contenders to the throne. The cases reveal the lasting legitimizing value of the Isaurian dynasty and suggest that the capital was in favour of Iconoclasm broadly speaking, although the motives were certainly diverse; as Brubaker and Haldon conclude 'deeply

[41] Treadgold 1988, offers a useful historical synthesis, and for a more recent broad treatment see Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 248–365. On the military unrest in this period, see Kaegi 1981, 220–69, and specifically on the role of the *tagmata*, Haldon 1984, 338–53. For individual reigns, see on Leo IV, Speck 1978, 53–103, Rochow 1996, and PmbZ #4243; on Constantine VI, Speck's comprehensive study (1978) and PmbZ #3704; on Eirene, Lilie 1996, Herrin 2001, 51–129, and PmbZ #1439; on Nikephoros I, Niavis 1987, and PmbZ #5252; on Staurakios, PmbZ #6866; on Michael I, PmbZ #4989; finally, on Leo V, see the excellent treatment of his origins and the conflicting claims about the circumstances that led to his ascension in Turner 1990b, and more generally PmbZ #4244.
[42] Stephenson 2006.
[43] See Ch. 3, sub-heading 'Emperor Theophilos'.
[44] See Ch. 3, sub-heading 'Termination of Iconoclasm'.

held faith, piety, and pragmatism are not necessarily mutually exclusive'.[45] Next, I look at the atmosphere in Constantinople in the early ninth century (811–13) in the context of the humiliating defeats suffered at the hands of Bulgarians. I analyse in some detail the extraordinary incident in the church of the Holy Apostles in June 813, when a group of retired soldiers performed a *presbeia* at the tomb of Constantine V, calling on the emperor to rise from the dead and save the empire. The following two headings examine, first, the return to Iconoclasm under Leo V (813–20) and the impact of the memory of the Isaurian dynasty in these events, and, second, the anti-Iconoclast polemics of the early ninth-century (c. 809–20). Particular attention is being paid to the works of the exiled Patriarch Nikephoros that, composed in reaction to the return to Iconoclasm in 815, systematically targeted any positive memory of Constantine V. I stress the effects of the return to Iconoclasm on the memory of the Isurians in the capital, and on the members of the opposite camp, the iconophiles, which has not received enough emphasis in scholarship. The reigns of the last two Iconoclast emperors, Michael II (820–9) and his son Theophilos (829–42) are examined for evidence of direct, or less obvious examples of emulation of Leo III and Constantine V. My most important conclusion is that the positive memory of the Isaurians remained relatively intact in the capital until Theophilos' death at least.

The final section of the thesis covers the period between Theophilos' death (842) and the assassination of his son, Michael III (867), and analyses the attitudes towards the Isaurian rulers, and more broadly Iconoclasm, in public and more limited discourse after the termination of Iconoclasm in 843, as far as the limited and problematic sources allow us to do so. I then look at promotion of the cult of Patriarch Nikephoros and ask if the latter's increased prestige may also have helped increase the popularity of his invectives against Constantine V, which we know to have circulated soon after 843. This section is followed by the examination of the absolution of the last iconoclast emperor, Theophilos, and the evidence in hagiographical literature that this absolution was not universally accepted. I examine whether Theophilos' Iconoclast past placed pressure on his son Michael III (sole reign 856–67) to demonstrate his dedication to the post-843 orthodoxy. This in turn may have played a role in Michael's decision to stage the disinterment and public humiliation of the remains of Emperor Constantine V, which is examined in considerable detail in the last section of the thesis. I argue that this spectacle constituted the earliest public condemnation of the Iconoclast emperors, and as such represents the manifestation of attitudes expressed in polemical literature for the previous sixty or more years.

[45] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 662.

CHAPTER ONE

The salvation of empire under Emperor Leo III (r. 717–41)

Historical background: The Arab conquest as a world-shattering event and Christian responses

The Arab conquest, and everything that it encompassed, was a world-shattering event that exerted a profound impact on contemporaries – and continues to do so, in a very different manner of course, on modern researchers: James Howard-Johnston recently compared it with the Big Bang.[46] Among the polities that managed to survive the 'world crisis' of the seventh century,[47] Byzantium was probably struck the hardest. Not only did the empire swiftly lose its wealthiest provinces, but the shock of the Arab expansion came less than a decade after the Byzantines had celebrated a great and exhausting victory over Sasanian Persia – their principle rival, the other 'eye of the world'[48] – which raised hopes of a new 'golden age'.[49] The Byzantines responded to the Arab conquest as they would to a violent earthquake or a volcano eruption: they considered it a divine punishment for their own sins or, rather, for the sins of their leaders. This was particularly problematic;[50] Brubaker and Haldon stress that the eroding imperial authority was not merely an 'ideological' issue.[51] Questions of causality preoccupied and permeated all segments of society looking for a 'cure', and the answer, inevitably, was that the military fortunes of the empire were tied to maintaining orthodoxy.[52] This existential political and ideological crisis was exacerbated by the fact that the Arabs were claiming to have received the third and final revelation of God, superseding the previous two received by the Jews and the Christians, challenging some core beliefs. As Patricia Crone points out, the Byzantines were used to their faith being under attack by heretics from within and by the Jews from outside, or their polity being assaulted by Byzantine rebels or foreign barbarians, but '[t]he Arabs were, so to speak, Jews who had come back with an army, or conversely, barbarians returning with a prophet: they were not just God's rod, but also claimed to be his mouthpiece, and their tremendous success lent some credence to their claim'.[53]

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[46] Howard-Johnston 2010, 4: 'The history of the Middle East in the seventh century … is the equivalent on the human plane of a cosmic event, even perhaps of the Big Bang.'
[47] Howard-Johnston 2010. The standard work on Byzantium in the seventh century is still Haldon 1990.
[48] For the concept of Rome and Persia as the 'two eyes of the earth' see most recently Canepa 2010.
[49] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 17; Drijvers 2002.
[50] Kaegi 1969; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 18–22.
[51] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 18.
[52] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 18–22.
[53] Crone 1980, 60.

692 CE as the 'watershed' year in the ideological struggle between empire and caliphate?

Although the question of early Islam is a highly problematic one, the consensus among scholars nowadays suggests that it took some time to develop.[54] While Mu'āwiya sought support of Christian communities during the First *Fitna* (656–61), the situation changed during the Second *Fitna* (683–92), which engendered a politically more defined and aggressive proclamation of Islam, as the contenders claimed legitimacy on 'explicitly religious grounds'.[55] The new Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 692–705) introduced a set of reforms, both practical and ideological, that would have long lasting effects on the Caliphate and the world surrounding it. In his recent monograph dedicated to 'Abd al-Malik, Robinson singles out Islamization and Arabicization as the two most significant processes set in motion; he emphasizes that it was only during 'Abd al-Malik's reign that the 'idea of God's caliphate […] became fully explicit', and concludes that with 'the caliph being the instrument of God, the empire he ruled was densely signposted with symbols of God's, Muhammad's, and the caliph's authority'.[56] Introducing Islam's symbols of authority went concurrently with removing or denying those associated with the Byzantine Christian empire. While crosses had been targeted sporadically from the mid-seventh century, Robinson points out that the removal of crosses from public venues under 'Abd al-Malik shows 'signs of systematic policy'.[57] The primary examples of public manifestation of 'Abd al-Malik's policy, featuring more specific messages, are associated with the Dome of the Rock and the evolution of gold dinar; both revolutionary in their own right, and both inducing some 'Christian responses'.

The construction of the Dome of the Rock

One of the earliest declarations of supremacy of the emerging faith is proclaimed through a selection of mostly qur'anic and some non-qur'anic quotations on the outer and inner walls of Islam's first monumental edifice, the Dome of the Rock, dated to 72 AH (691/2).[58] Besides declaration of Islam, the outer inscription already announces what can be termed an anti-Trinitarian message, asserting that God 'has no associate'.[59] The

[54] See the recent assessment by Hoyland 2006.
[55] Howard-Johnston 2010, 512.
[56] Robinson 2005, 123–8, quote at 126.
[57] Crone 1980, 68; Robinson 2005, 75–9.
[58] The dating is made following the outer inscription although it may mark the beginning or the end of construction as many scholars point out. See the pertinent analysis by Grabar O. 1978, 48–67. The most recent treatment is Milwright 2016, whose careful analysis of mosaics suggests a level of improvization by the mosaicists, adding further to the conclusion that this was indeed an early stage of development for Islam – even the *shahāda* was yet to receive its standardized formula.
[59] Tr. Hoyland 1997, 696.

inner inscriptions lays further stress on denying the Trinity and the divinity of Christ while addressing the Christians and the Jews directly:

> O people of the Book, do not exaggerate in your religion; and only say the truth about God. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of God […] Believe therefore in God and his messengers, and do not say 'Three'; refrain, it is better for you. God is only one god; he is too exalted to have a son.[60]

The inscription concludes with the proclamation of Islam: 'Religion with God is Islam'.[61] The two additional inscriptions at the outer gates identify the opponents as idolaters: 'He it is who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, so that he may cause it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may hate it'.[62] Grabar concludes that the implication of the content is twofold:

> On the one hand, it has a missionary character; it is an invitation, a rather impatient one, to 'submit' to the new and final faith, which accepts Christ and Hebrew prophets as its forerunners. At the same time it is an assertion of superiority and strength of the new faith and of the state based on it.

Such assertions provoked a Christian response. It is hardly a coincidence, as Grabar further notes, that, at the same time, the Christians in the neighbouring Nazareth had been redecorating the basilica of the Nativity with images of councils confirming the Trinitarian dogma.[63] This exemplifies what scholars have concluded from literary sources; namely that when it comes to religious polemic, there existed an awareness of 'other's arguments among the members of three Abrahamic religions.[64]

Coinage reforms: The standing Caliph and aniconic dinar

In the first forty or so years after the Arab conquest, the politico-economic infrastructure was left unchanged – namely the tax system and the administration manning it as well as the tri-metallic denomination structure based on Byzantine (gold and copper) or Sasanian (silver) coinage, with the *nomisma* remaining the dominant gold currency and the

[60] Tr. Hoyland 1997, 698. The anti-Trinitarian message occurs repeatedly, e.g., on the outer wall, tr. Hoyland 1997, 697: 'Praise be to God who has not taken a son, and who has no companion in sovereignty nor a protector through dependence.'
[61] Tr. Hoyland 1997, 699.
[62] Tr. Grabar O. 1978, 63.
[63] Grabar O. 1978, 65.
[64] Crone 1980. Hoyland 2006. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 105–7.

basis of economy in the Middle East.[65] The pre-eminence of gold coinage from the politico-economic and ideological perspective – inherently asserting authority of the state that had stamped its mark[66] – is best reflected in the famous 'war of images' between Byzantium and the Caliphate that manifested itself during the last decade of the seventh century.[67] The gold dinar struck under 'Abd al-Malik in c. 690 was still modeled on the Byzantine *nomisma*, featuring three standing figures on the obverse and a cross on steps on the reverse,[68] with a notable removal of the crossbar to effectively deface the latter.[69] It seems that these coins provoked the Byzantine emperor Justinian II. The chronicler Theophanes famously records for the year 690/1 that Justinian 'refused to accept the minted coin that had been sent by Abimelech [i.e., 'Abd al-Malik] because it was of a new kind that had never been made before'.[70] Approximately at this time, Justinian II issued the new type of *nomisma* featuring for the first time the bust of Christ accompanied by the title *rex regnantium* ('king of those who rule') on the obverse, and the standing figure of the emperor titled *Servus Cristi* on the reverse (fig. 1).[71] The 'war of images' continued with 'Abd al-Malik's new, increasingly 'Islamic', design (74–7 AH = 693–7 CE), introducing a warlike standing effigy of the Caliph 'menacingly' holding a sword in hand accompanied by the inscription 'Caliph of God, Commander of the Believers' on the obverse, and a profession of Islam emphasizing one God on the reverse.[72] The most significant change, however, was the aniconic dinar introduced a few years later (c. 696), consisting only of inscription (in center and on the border) declaring Islam as the true faith:

> (obverse center) 'There is no god but God alone, He has no associate'; (obverse margin) 'Muhammad is the messenger of God whom he sent with guidance and the religion of truth that He might make it prevail over all religion'; (reverse center) 'God the one, God the eternal, He did not beget and was not begotten'; (reverse margin) 'In the name of God this dīnār was struck in year …'[73]

[65] Papaconstantinou 2010. Haldon 2010. Humphreys 2013, 231.
[66] Grierson 2001, 71.
[67] This is not to say that other denominations did not play a role. Recent research laid much stress on copper coinage, and an obvious sign of influence in silver, albeit in the opposite direction, is visible from the reformed denomination under the emperor Leo III in the second decade of the eighth century (on which see below). Humphreys 2013 is the most recent treatment of the issue. See also further examples of the importance of gold coinage in Robinson 2005, 75, and the following testimony of Theophanes.
[68] The design introduced by the emperor Herakleios, type IV according to Grierson's classification, *DOC* 2.1, 223–4, 257–63, pl. IX, nos. 33–36.
[69] See Robinson 2005, fig. at p. 78.
[70] Theophanes, 365, tr. Mango and Scott, 509–10, n. 1.
[71] *DOC* 2.2, 568–71, 578–80, pl. XXXVII, nos. 7–10. Breckenridge 1959. The chronology of Justinian's issue is still being discussed, but Humphreys 2013, recently advanced good arguments for a 690/1 dating.
[72] Robinson 2005, 85–6, fig. at p. 50.
[73] Tr. Hoyland 1997, 699–700.

With this issue, that would remain the standard for centuries, the transition of design from imitating Byzantine *nomisma* to distinctly Islamic dinar was complete.

Apocalyptic literature and imperial ideology under Emperor Justinian II

By the end of the seventh century, it became clear that the Arab conquest was not a temporary situation, and it certainly had an impact on contemporaries. Another Christian response to the developments during the Second *Fitna*, was the surge of apocalyptic writing, initiated with the immensely popular and influential *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios* (c. 685-92).[74] While portending the end of the world, apocalyptic literature was also a way of coping with the existential crisis, a response that in its essence was the defence of Christian faith achieved by inserting the Arab conquest into the eschatological plan designed by God. The apocalypse offered hope of a divine intervention, mediated through the image of a victorious last Roman emperor as the saviour and precursor of Christ's second coming.[75] As a literary strategy, this may have been an attempt of mobilizing support for reconquest by the empire.[76] In hindsight, it is clear that this was not a realistic hope, but imperial rhetoric and policy under the emperor Justinian II was very much oriented towards re-conquest. Humphreys recently analysed in detail the ideology expressed in the *prosphonetikos logos* of the council in Trullo,[77] and concluded that 'it was a rhetoric, identity, and mode of rulership designed for reconquest'.[78] More specifically, he explains that the text was 'staking a claim for legitimate rule over all Christians by the emperor in Constantinople', and 'proclaimed the common identity and unity of the Christian *oikoumene* in a particularly 'martial setting'.[79] Indeed, the empire and its subjects were emphatically identified as Christian,[80] and the emperor Justinian II as appointed by Christ to rule over all and protect them: 'Christ our God, who steers this greatest of ships, the entire world, has now set you over us, the wise governor, the pious Emperour, our protector indeed'.[81] Essentially the same message was conveyed visually with Justinian's *Servus Cristi* design. These conclusions must be seen in the

[74] While the dating of the composition is still a matter of debate, the most commonly accepted range is the one presented above. Reinink 2000, advanced good arguments for the text being composed as a response to the building of the Dome of the Rock. On the apocalyptic aspect of the Dome, see also Milwright 2016, 241ff. Overall, the literature on Ps.-Methodius' Apocalypse is vast: see Alexander 1985, 13–51. Reinink 1992, id. 1993a, id. 1993b, id. 2000. Kraft 2012. Bonura 2016. See also the forthcoming thesis by Christopher Bonura, 'The Apocalypse of Methodius of Patara: History and Prophecy in the Christian Encounter with Islam'. On the more general question of apocalyptic literature and prophecies, see Magdalino 2007b.
[75] Kraft 2012, with further literature.
[76] Reinink 1992. Kraft 2012.
[77] *Trullo*, 45–55.
[78] Humphreys 2015, 37–80, quote at 56.
[79] Ibid., 50–1, 56.
[80] The address opens with what can be termed as Christianization of *oikoumene*, *Trullo*, tr. Featherstone, 46: 'Now that the ineffable divine grace of our Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ has encompassed all the earth …'
[81] *Trullo*, tr. Featherstone, 49.

context of a considerable number of Christians remaining outside imperial borders under the rule of the Caliphate, which brings us back to the theme of re-conquest. The language employed in Trullo reveals the increasing 'scripturalization' of imperial rhetoric,[82] which, in conjecture with the mind-set of reconquest, also brought up the identification of the Byzantines as περιούσιος λαός, a 'chosen people'.[83] The *logos* claims that Justinian II had surpassed Phinehas,[84] the warrior priest from the Old Testament on a divine mission to defeat the Medianites (i.e., the Arabs).[85] In the same year the council met (692 CE) the emperor launched a campaign against the Arabs, naming the Slavic contigent of the army as περιούσιος λαός.[86] This campaign, sometimes named Justinian's 'crusade', demonstrates that the ideology expressed in Trullo was not just empty rhetoric.[87] However, the Byzantine army suffered defeat in the major battle of Sebastopolis, marking the end of Justinian II's offensive policy and contributing to his downfall.[88]

After Justinian II's deposition in 695, Byzantium entered 'twenty years of anarchy',[89] while the caliphate made major advances into Anatolia, Armenia, and north Africa laying the grounds for future conquests under 'Abd al-Malik's sons, al-Walīd (r. 705–15) and Sulaymān (r. 715–17). The renewed military supremacy of the Caliphate provided further support for the more aggressive assertions of Islam as the true faith, challenging Christian interpretations at the same time. With increased confidence, the caliphate mobilized vast resources pursuing the war of 'annihilation' against Byzantium that culminated with the siege of Constantinople in 717/18.[90] The preparations took almost three years, the campaign was led by Maslama, 'Abd al-Malik's son and half-brother of the reigning caliph Sulaymān, and the zeal was fuelled with a surge of apocalyptic propaganda predicting the conquest of the city.[91] Some Byzantines may have felt like God had abandoned them.[92]

[82] Magdalino and Nelson 2010; Humphreys 2015, 54.
[83] *Trullo*, tr. Featherstone, 52–3, 'It was your great desire, therefore, after the example of Christ, the good Shepherd, searching for the sheep lost in the mountains, to bring together this holy nation, as a special people (περιούσιον λαόν)'. See Magdalino and Nelson 2010, 14–20, for a deeper background of the association of the Byzantines with the chosen people.
[84] *Trullo*, 50.
[85] Humphreys 2015, 51–6.
[86] Theophanes, 366.
[87] Magdalno and Nelson 2010, 18–9.
[88] Nikephoros §38, Theophanes, 365–6.
[89] Kaegi 1981, 186–208.
[90] Auzépy 2008, 254–6. Howard-Johnston 2010, 510–12. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 73–5.
[91] Bashear 1991.
[92] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §2, tr. Zavros, 764, 'Where is the God of the Romans?'.

The Arab siege of Constantinople in 717/18 and its impact on Leo III's imperial ideology

In addition to the disruption of life in the provinces caused by the Arab raids,[93] the Byzantine capital experienced a period of anarchy, caused by violent power take-overs in the period between 695 and 717.[94] As the Arab onslaught progressed in Asia Minor and the islands, the authorities were becoming aware that the siege of the capital was imminent. The account preserved in Nikephoros and Theophanes,[95] reports preparations initiated by the emperor Anastasios II (r. 713–15) after a diplomatic mission – ostensibly peace negotiations – conducted by Daniel Sinopites, the patrician and the *eparch* of the capital, had confirmed the fears regarding the scale of the Arab land and sea forces.[96] The first ordinance reported was 'that each man should store provisions for himself up to a period of three years, and anyone not having means to do so should leave the city'.[97] Thus, the citizens were faced with the choice to either be prepared for a very long siege, with an inevitably unpredictable outcome, or with the no less precarious alternative of leaving the city. We do not know how seriously this ordinance has been pursued, particularly after the change of government soon after, but it seems likely that staying in Constantinople was the preferred option.[98] Remaining in the city meant placing faith in divine protection and temporal forces – the fortifications of Constantinople,[99] and the ability of the authorities to marshal the defence, which could have been reasonably doubted at the time. The only outcome that the citizens could be certain of was that if the defences failed, the ensuing slaughter and plunder would be tantamount to apocalypse. Indeed, the atmosphere of doom peaked as the Arab armies approached, reflected in two apocalyptic texts, probably composed around this time,[100] which predict that 'the people of the Seven-hilled (city) will be afflicted by the sword',[101] and even envisage the Arabs

[93] The effects are visible in the cannons of Trullo for example, *Trullo*, canons §18, §30, §§ 37–9.
[94] Nikephoros §51, and Theophanes, 386, record that 'the lawless soldiers' looted the houses of citizens in good standing. On the period of unrest, see Kaegi 1981, 186–208. Treadgold 1990. Haldon, 1990, 74–83.
[95] Deriving from their common source, the so-called 'Trajan the Patrician,' on which see the following pages.
[96] Nikephoros §49. Theophanes, 383–4. Anastasios II, PmbZ #236. Daniel, PmbZ #1218. On this mission, see Kaplony 1996, 203–6, with further references.
[97] Theophanes, 384, tr. Mango and Scott, 534. Further preparations, ibid., involved building of the *dromones* and fire-breathing biremes; restauration of the sea and land walls, and equipping them with war engines; and, finally, storing of enough produce for a long siege. Parallel section in Nikephoros, §49.
[98] In addition to the Constantinopolitan citizens, we may assume some influx of refugees pressed by the Arab advance. According to the *Chronicle of 1234*, tr. Hoyland 2011, 213, the Byzantines also suffered during the winter, and *SynaxCP*, 903, states that 'the city was hard pressed' (ἡ μὲν πόλις λίαν ἐστενοχωρεῖτο), which may suggest a shortage of supplies.
[99] On the extraordinary care and importance accorded to the city walls in the narratives about the siege, see below, 43–4. On the walls as the lasting symbol of the city, see Magdalino 2001, 9–10.
[100] These are the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, and an interpolation in the first Greek redaction of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, both relying on the original *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Although the dating of these texts remains debated, on which see below, n. 142, we have solid evidence that the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* had arrived at Constantinople, and was already translated into Greek, Latin and Armenian, in c. 710, and that 'apocalyptic mood' in the years leading to the siege was very much present in the capital. On dating of the transmission, see Bonura 2016. On the independent evidence of 'apocalyptic mood' in Constantinople, Brandes 1987.
[101] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §2, tr. Zervos, 764.

breaching the Xylokerkos gate and reaching the Forum of the Ox.[102] For at least some of the refugees in the city, these visions of the future may have been familiar, or not too distant reality.

Defending the city: Leo III as successor of Constantine IV

It was thus in the state of extreme emergency that the elites agreed to remove Emperor Theodosios III, considered incapable of managing the defence, and to accept as the new emperor the *patrikios* Leo, *strategos* of the Anatolikon, who had probably already been proclaimed emperor by the Asiatic forces.[103] The text used by both of our sources (Nikephoros and Theophanes) for the 668–720 period, is a history by the so-called 'Trajan the Patrician,'[104] which hints at a justification of the decision to elect, or accept, Leo as emperor (post factum from c. 718-20) and provides an insight into the background of the ideological discourse at the beginning of his reign and overall the impact of the siege. To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to outline some characteristics of this text.

The internal evidence provides solid grounds for locating 'Trajan' as a (perhaps retired) military officer with privileged access, residing in Constantinople, and dating the text between 668 and c. 718, that is between the beginning of the reign of the emperor Constantine IV and the immediate aftermath of the siege of Constantinople in 717/18.[105] The impact of the momentous events of 717/18 is evident. The text is framed between the two Arab sieges (667–8/9,[106] and 717/18) and two 'ideal' emperors who both came to power in the context of an Arab siege of the capital and led the defence – Constantine IV and Leo III. Moreover, the description of the first siege was visibly influenced by the more recent event.[107] The only other ruler accorded positive qualification is also related

[102] *Greek Ps.-Methodius*, §13.
[103] Nikephoros, § 52. Theophanes, 390. For a reconstruction of the power-takeover see Kaegi 1981, 193–5. See also Angold 2010, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 72–4. For Leo's origins and history before ascending the throne, see Gero 1973, 1–31. PmbZ #4242.
[104] The attribution is made based on an entry from *Suda*, Mango and Scott 1997, lxxxviii, and on a remark in Theophanes 66.2–3.
[105] Nikephoros, §34–58, Theophanes, 352–401. Mango 1990, 15–17 established the chronological frame. Jankowiak 2013, 252–4, argued that the siege of Constantinople in 717/18 is probably the last event covered by the 'Trajan', but it is possible that he included the usurpation attempt by the former emperor Anastasios II and a very brief testimony of Constantine V's coronation, Nikephoros, §§57–8; Theophanes, 400–1. Treadgold 2011, proposes the earlier date (629), and maintains it in id., 2013, 8–17, but does express a very subtle reservation in concluding lines, ibid., 17. Afinogenov 2002, began the investigation of the technical military jargon and most recently Jankowiak 2013, 249–56, expanded Afinogenov's inquiry and made further observations of the thematic and ideological characteristics. Embracing these findings, I would suggest that the additional numismatic material and contextual and ideological consideration corroborate the 668 dating, for which see the following discussion.
[106] Recently re-dated by Jankowiak 2013.
[107] The most obvious being the storm that eventually destroyed the Arab fleet. See the discussion in Jankowiak 2013, 252–3, and Howard-Johnston 2010, 302–5, who even considered, not without a reason, the first Arab siege to be a myth. The historical memory of the first Arab siege seems to have been feeble already at the time, and Jankowiak, 252–3, concludes that Trajan must have been writing from memory rather than relying on written account(s).

with the 717/18 events – the emperor Anastasios II, praised for preparing the city for the siege; in fact, this section is a positive summary of what was considered good government by the author, which is the dominant theme of the text.[108] Ideal rulers and proper government are accentuated further in contrast with negative examples, best visible in the contrasting treatment of the 'ideal emperor', Constantine IV, and his tyrant son, Justinian II, who is the main villain.

'Trajan' opens with the emperor Constantine IV taking necessary preparations upon hearing about the Arab threat, and successfully defending the capital.[109] The defeated Arabs sue for peace, which is subsequently extended to the Avars and the Bulgarians;[110] 'the Roman Empire [τῆς Ῥωμαίων βασιλείας] being thus at peace on all sides', the emperor convened the sixth ecumenical council to deal with 'the impious heresy of the Monotheletes'.[111] After securing the protection of the capital, peace in the empire, and purification of the spiritual realm, Emperor Constantine IV spent his remaining days in 'peace and tranquility', a phrase which is repeated twice more in the text and seems to symbolize the ultimate achievement for a ruler,[112] earning him an honorable burial: when the emperor Constantine IV died '[h]is body was laid down in the imperial *memorial* at [the Church of] the Holy Apostles'.[113] I think that in the treatment of Constantine IV, we can observe the familiar structure of a *basilikos logos*: a) the deeds of war, b) the deeds of peace, c) religious zeal, d) a noble death.[114] The negative turn is visible in the opening line for the emperor Justinian II who 'on assuming power, undid the measures which his father had taken for the sake of peace and the good order of the state',[115] thus initiating the disruptive period which is summarized in the section that introduces the advent of the emperor Leo III on 25 March 717:[116]

[108] Exemplified in such lines as, Nikephoros, §49, tr. Mango 117, 'Anastasios bestowed care on military affairs and appointed capable commanders to take charge of them,' and, Theophanes, 383–4, tr. Mango and Scott, 534, 'Artemios [i.e. Anastasios II] appointed very able *strategoi* of the cavalry *themata* and learned officials to fill civil posts'. Both sources then describe the preparations for the siege, mentioned above, which include the restoration of the land and sea walls, but the *Parastaseis*, §3, tr. Cameron and Herrin 59, states that 'the sea walls were repaired under Tiberius Apsimar; before him they had been completely neglected'.
[109] Nikephoros, §34. Theophanes, 353–4. See Jankowiak 2013, 252ff., on the discrepancies in Theophanes due to his use of the eastern source(s).
[110] Nikephoros, §§34–6. Theophanes, 358–9.
[111] Nikephoros, §37, tr. Mango, 91, 93. Theophanes, 359–60.
[112] The other examples at Nikephoros, §37, §55. Jankowiak 2013, 251 n. 53, considers it to be a 'slogan in relation to good emperors'.
[113] Nikephoros, §37.12–4, tr. Mango 93, καὶ κατατίθεται αὐτου τὸ λείψανον ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων μνήμασι. I have amended Mango's rendition of μνήμασι as 'sepulchres,' because it does not convey immediately the commemorative aspect of the imperial tombs. We know at least from the Synaxarion that the commemorations were taking place, and we shall see further manifestations that warrant the translation as 'memorial.'
[114] See for example Menander Rhetor, 76–95.
[115] Nikephoros, §38, tr. Mango, 93.
[116] This is the traditionally accepted date, provided in a later entry by Theophanes, 412, *PmbZ* #4242.

> On account of the frequent assumptions of imperial power and the prevalence of usurpation, the affairs of the empire and the City were being neglected and declined; furthermore, education was being destroyed and military organization crumbled. As a result, the enemy were able to overrun the Roman State with impunity [and to cause] much slaughter, abduction, and the capture of cities. For this reason also the Saracens advanced on the Imperial city itself […]. When the military and civil dignitaries became aware of these matters, [taking account] of Theodosios' lack of experience and his incapacity of offering resistance to the enemy, they pressed him with exhortations to abdicate the imperial office and assume without harm a private station. He accordingly withdrew after a reign of one year. Thereupon they held a ballot of who was to become emperor and elected the patrician Leo, who was at the time strategos of the so-called Anatolic army. According to imperial custom, he was received in procession as he entered Byzantium through the Golden Gate and, having come to the Great Church, was invested with the imperial crown.[117]

The decline and even the Arab siege is presented as a result of bad government and tyrannical usurpations of power, which is contrasted with the sound choice made by those in the position to 'hold a ballot', resulting in the advent of the emperor Leo III.[118]

The text undeniably promotes the new emperor, and does so in parallel with the ideal emperor Constantine IV; one detail even suggests that the portrayal of Constantine seems to have been modelled to better fit Leo. Namely, the author does not assign any role to Constantine IV's noble ancestry; in fact, there is no explicit statement about it at all. Yet the negative portrayal of Justinian II makes implicit statement that reputable ancestors are no guarantee of good governing. Of the two emperors, the current one was a newcomer, while the ideal model was the last worthy representative of the celebrated Herakleian dynasty; similar to the narrative of the siege, 'Trajan's description of the ideal model was probably designed with contemporary concerns in mind. While clearly promoting Leo, it may be considered whether the author of the text harboured a tacit hope to instruct the new emperor in what ought to be his priorities in order to achieve 'peace and tranquillity' and be rewarded by honourable commemorations inside the Holy Apostles, like the emperor Constantine IV. He would thus be able to avoid, and this is important, the fate of the tyrant, Justinian II, who was denied a proper burial.[119] In any

[117] Nikephoros, §52, tr. Mango, 121.
[118] Although rhetorically distinct, this structure thematically resembles the lines from the *Prosphoneticos Logos* of the Trullo council introducing the emperor Justinian II, *Trullo*, 49.13–50.1, tr. Featherstone, 'as we conduct our lives in great sloth and slumber the idleness of our thoughts, so that the waylaying enemy can come upon us unawares […]'.
[119] Notably, the most graphic images of violence are associated with the emperor Justinian II, whether he was the one inflicting it, as in Theophanes, 379, tr. Mango and Scott, 528, when Justinian is said to have 'slaughtered the children of Elias in their mother's lap', or when he was on the receiving end, Theophanes, 381, tr. Mango and Scott, 529, when the same Elias 'cut off his [Justinian's] head with the dagger'. The murder of Justinian's six-year old son Tiberios by the *patrikios* Mauros and the *spatharios* John Strouthos is particularly detailed and grisly; according to Theophanes, 380, tr. Mango and Scott, 529, Tiberios has been dragged 'grasping the little column of altar' of the Blachernae church, where his mother brought him in hope of salvation; then 'they stripped him and, stretching him out on the door-sill, cut his throat as if he were a sheep'. Less detailed, but essentially the same description in Nikephoros, §45.

case, regardless of the author's intention, this conclusion could be drawn by an attentive reader.

That the soon-to-be emperor was received in a processional route resembling that of an imperial triumph – from the Golden Gate to Hagia Sophia – deserves a comment.[120] Although it is perhaps not surprising that Leo was received in such a ceremony, the introductory statement καὶ ὡς ἦν ἔθος βασιλεῦσι, 'as it was a custom for the emperors', sounds like an explanation, if not justification, suggesting some may have been surprised, not really remembering this custom.[121] Judging from Nikephoros and Theophanes, it is noteworthy that the only imperial coronation mentioned by 'Trajan' during the period of anarchy is that of Anastasios II,[122] confirming again the positive memory of this emperor, and more importantly, implicitly portraying Anastasios and Leo as the only legitimate rulers in this period. The ceremony of Leo III's coronation may have had to do with the acceptance of the new emperor into the imperial city. The *strategos* Leo, although he had certainly frequented the capital as a high-ranking military official, was not its resident. Apart from the habitual resistance toward a newcomer, the very recent history of Constantinople probably meant that a priori mistrust existed among the citizens at large and especially within whatever rival groups may have existed among the elites. The solemn procession was, therefore, probably designed, on the one hand, with a view of securing a smooth assumption of power and achieving legitimation of the new emperor – perhaps to be distinguished from the emperors of the recent memory who had ascended the throne by force – and, on the other, perhaps as a visualisation of the both the hope and promise that Leo was the right choice.

[120] The text of Theophanes, 390, on the transition of power agrees with Nikephoros, §52, in describing the senate mediating the transition, but includes the patriarch as a member of the decision-making group and, importantly, completely omits the coronation, dissociating the patriarch Germanos from the act, but does include that Leo sent to the patriarch a pledge to 'keep the church undisturbed'. Another version of the coronation is preserved in the Brussels Chronicle, 31.15–19, which states that Leo was crowned by the patriarch Germanos in the Tribunal, where Leo's son Constantine will also be crowned in 720. I believe the two accounts are not necessarily mutually exclusive, i.e., it is possible that there were two ceremonies, the first on Leo's arrival as described in Nikephoros, and another in the Tribunal, for the more limited audience. Comparative case can be the coronation of Emperor Constantine VI, Theophanes, 449–50. This was the most elaborate coronation ceremony in the whole period, taking a full week, with the main coronation act beginning at the Hippodrome and only then moving to Hagia Sophia. From the perspective of the level of publicity, in both cases the trajectory is from the more to less public.

[121] As McCormick 1985, explained, the customs that were well-known were rarely recorded. Leo III's coronation resembles that of Leo I in its key stages, which Dagron defined as the 'new man' coronation model, Dagron 2003, 60-74; ibid., 60-5, for a detailed treatment of Leo I's coronation. I am grateful to Professor Paul Magdalino for drawing my attention to the coronation of Leo I. A comparable later example is that of Emperor Leo V, on which see the chapter 3, *Leo V emulating the 'famous' Isaurians*, with references.

[122] Nikephoros, §48. Theophanes, 383. There is only one mention for Leontios in Theophanes, 369, tr. Mango and Scott, who says that they 'proclaimed Leontios emperor', but no account of coronation, and nothing in Nikephoros, §40, either. Likewise, there is nothing on coronations or even proclamations of Tiberios III (Nik. §41. Th. 371), Philippikos (Nik. §§45–6. Th. 381), and Theodosios III (Nik. §§51–2. Th. 386–7). However, *Brussels Chronicle*, 30–1, relates that all these rulers have been crowned by patriarchs of their time: Leontios (30.13–14) and Tiberios III (30.15–16), by Patriarch Kallinikos; Philippikos (30.25–6) by Patriarch John VI; and Theodosios III (31.10–12), by Patriarch Germanos.

Emperor Leo III's early coinage (c. 717–20) offers evidence congruent with the ideological programme presented by 'Trajan'. The first and only issue of *nomismata* for this period,[123] employs iconography barely distinguishable from the designs of Anastasios II,[124] which agrees with the positive treatment of this emperor by our source, but may also relate to the reports of Leo's pronouncement of loyalty to the emperor Anastasios II, and refusal to recognize Theodosios III as the new emperor.[125] The other denominations are 'ideologically' more telling. The obverse of the initial class of ceremonial silver coins (fig. 2), and of the standard issue of copper coins for the period, feature a bearded bust of the emperor with a spear over his right shoulder, wearing cuirass, shield, and helmet with plume and cross, emulating emperor Constantine IV's ubiquitous military iconography, that had been used on all of his numismatic denominations and, exceptionally, on seals as well (figs. 3–5).[126] Following the disappearance of the *hexagram* as the standard silver denomination towards the end of the seventh century, the issues of silver coins were of rather ceremonial character in this period, usually struck using the *nomismata* dies.[127] This practice is attested for two of Leo's predecessors, the emperors Anastasios II and Theodosios III;[128] their silver coins were struck using the standard gold coin dies. For the coins struck for the emperor Leo III, however, only the reverse die was borrowed, while a separate die was cut for the honorary obverse – the one emulating Constantine IV – which means that additional care and effort was placed in designing the coin. This indeed suggests a ceremonial role. If Emperor Leo III's coronation procession included largess or customary gift-giving,[129] these silver coins would fit the occasion and the context well, implying that Leo was presented as a worthy successor

[123] DOC3.1, 229, 241–2, nos. 1a–2b, plate I, nos. 1b–g. See also Penna 1990, 5, and Füeg 2007, 12, pl. 49, nos. 1–1.B.19.
[124] DOC2.2, 673, 675–6, nos. 1–3a, pl. XLVI, nos. 2a.2–3a. Füeg 2007, 12, pl. 46–7, nos. 2.A.1–2.U.1.
[125] Theophanes, 386, 390.
[126] Leo III's Ceremonial silver coin: DOC 3.1, 231, 251, no. 20a, pl. II, no. 20a; Füeg 2007, 12, pl. 50 nos. 2.1–3. Leo III's standard *folles* for years 717–20: DOC 3.1, 232–3, 253–4, nos., 24–8, pl. III, nos., 24, 25, 27. Penna 1990, 141–2. Constantine IV's numismatic examples are found at DOC 2.2, 515–8, 526–7, 533–4, 538–9, pl. xxxii, nos. 4, 6 (gold), pl. xxxii, nos. 19 (ceremonial issue silver), 22 (hexagram silver), and pl. xxxiii, nos. 30, 31c (copper). It should be stressed that while the coins of Emperor Tiberios III feature a representation with a spear and a shield, it was a visibly different type, attested only in fifth-century western examples, DOC2.2, 624, 626–30, pl. xli., nos. 1–8. For Constantine IV's seals, see DOS6, 50–53, nos. 23.1–7. With regards to seals, Emperor Constantine IV broke with the tradition and dropped the representation of the Virgin; instead, he placed his bust on the obverse and the cross potent on the reverse, harmonizing the seals according to his coins. The specimen at Ibid., 53–4, no. 24.1, may be a late example of Emperor Constantine IV returning to the Virgin iconography on seals, although the bad state of the specimen does not allow for a safe attribution, and it may well belong to the emperor Leontius, on which see the discussion at Ibid., 54.
[127] DOC 2.1, 17–20. Penna 1990, 109–11.
[128] For Anastasius II, see DOC 2.2, 673, 677 no. 6 (no images published in DOC), and Füeg 2007, 11, pl. 46 nos. 1.A and 1.G, and for Theodosios III, see Füeg 2007, 11 (no images published).
[129] For the coronation practices, including the largesse and gifts see *ODB*, I, 533-4, s.v. 'Coronation,' and ibid., II, 1178-9, s.v. 'Largess.'

of Emperor Constantine IV from the very beginning of his reign. In any case, the parallels between Leo III's early coinage and the text of 'Trajan' allows us to qualify this emperor's early ideological programme further.

The text of 'Trajan' laid out the ideological and 'legitimizing' advantages for the new emperor Leo III, of attaching himself to the emperor Constantine IV. Politically, it signalled continuity with the last 'good' ruler, formally embracing the set of qualities associated with the idealized Constantine IV, thus suggesting the return to a good order of state. More importantly, seen in the context of the Arab siege that threatened to end the life for the Constantinopolitan population, adopting the military iconography of the emperor who in the past had managed to avert the same crisis that was playing out in the present, clearly suggests hopes for the same outcome. The design can also be seen as having the character of supplication to an 'ancestor' for intercession or, the same sensation from another perspective, it can be read as an apotropaic device. It has been demonstrated that the cross potent with the 'Jesus Christ Conquers' formula on the *miliaresia* of the emperors Leo III and Constantine V had apotropaic function,[130] and we also know that the same device (a cross with the 'IC XC NI KA' formula between the arms) has been used on the section of the Theodosian walls renovated under the Isaurians.[131] Finally, although this may not have been the original intention, the apotropaic function may well have been applied to the coin anyway, as was done customarily with similar items.[132]

It may be further considered whether a more formal, public statement was made by Leo during the twelve or thirteen months of the siege. Specifically, I mean during a commemoration of the emperor Constantine IV. The *Synaxarion of Constantinople* does not preserve any specific commemoration for Constantine IV, although there is a disputed entry that would fit the time of Constantine IV's death.[133] Nevertheless, the emperor Constantine IV is remembered on several occasions, specifically in the commemoration of the sixth ecumenical council.[134] That there was a separate commemoration inside the complex of the Holy Apostles is implied in the quoted passage from 'Trajan' relating that Constantine's remains were 'laid down in the imperial *memorial* ',[135] and we can reasonably presume that the 'ceremonial-conscious' emperor Justinian II commemorated his

[130] Walter 1997. Number of preserved Isaurian miliaresia are pierced, suggesting an apotropaic function: DOC3.1, pl. II–III, nos. 22a.5, 22b.3, 22c.3 (Leo III), and Ibid., pl. VIII, nos. 5.2–3 (Constantine V).
[131] Van Millingen 1899, 98–9. See now the excellent treatment of the inscription in bricks on the walls renovated in 740–3, Loaëc 2018.
[132] It must be stressed, however, that, to the best of my knowledge, none among the published silver coins emulating Constantine IV is pierced.
[133] Comparing the other mentions of the emperor Constantine IV in the *Synaxarion*, Karlin-Hayter 1966 ascribed this one to Emperor Basil I's son, Constantine.
[134] Karlin-Hayter 1966.
[135] See above, n. 113.

father, for political purposes if for no other reason.[136] A public commemoration of the emperor Constantine IV would be in line with the outlined ideological course of the emperor Leo III's early reign, and it would have been an opportunity for qualifying the relationship, perhaps reinforcing the 'sensation' of continuity, with the notable predecessor. More interestingly, if some such occasion did occur, it is tempting to think of whether some form of supplication underlined by hope for salvation could have been expressed? In the early ninth century, when the Bulgarians led by Krum inflicted a series of humiliating and devastating defeats on the Byzantines, the dismissed iconoclast soldiers made a supplication at the tomb of Emperor Constantine V to 'rise and save the state that is perishing'.[137]

Finally, the honouring of Emperor Constantine IV, and all aspects associated with it outlined above, may be reflected in the fact that the emperor Leo III named his son and heir Constantine. This is even more suggestive if, as I will argue, Constantine was born just one month before the Arab retreat, following Nikephoros, and not after the retreat, as stated in Theophanes and generally accepted in modern scholarship.[138] Not long after the just mentioned incident at Constantine V's tomb in the early ninth century, the new emperor Leo V had his son Symbatios renamed Constantine, emulating the Isaurian dynasty in hopes of achieving victory over the Bulgarians.[139] However, it must be stressed first, that Constantine the Great should never be excluded as an inspiration,[140] and second, that the name also conveniently honoured the family tradition, since Leo III's father was also named Constantine[141] – although the fact that Leo's son was being born as an heir to the emperor inevitably had some bearing on the name choice. Ultimately, honouring family tradition and making association with famous imperial figures of the past is not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Defending the city: Leo III as the Last Roman Emperor?

Besides the imperial legitimacy by association, it seems that the new emperor Leo was imbued with a degree of divine sanction as well through the so-called *Apocalypse of Daniel*. The dating of the text remains debated, but a number of scholars accept that it was originally composed on the eve of the Arab siege. The description of the advance of

[136] Expression by Magdalino 2007a, 14. See also id. 2015, emphasizing emperor Justinian II's role in the development of ceremonial. Moreover, the *prosphonetikos logos* of Trullo council, *Trullo*, 51.18–20, tr. Featherstone, mentions Justinian's father as 'former emperor Constantine of pious memory'.
[137] Theophanes, 501.10–11, tr. Mango and Scott, 684, ἀνάστηθι, καὶ βοήθησον τῇ πολιτείᾳ ἀπολλυμένῃ. This incident is treated in more detail in ch. 3.
[138] See the analysis at the beginning of Ch. 2, *When was Constantine V born?*.
[139] See ch. 3.
[140] See overall Magdalino 1994 (ed.), and id. 2007a.
[141] Gero 1973, 11.

the 'sons of the Hagar' reaching the *Seven-hilled city* agrees with the historical data on the progress of the Arab army, and it is the last historical event mentioned; in other words, the text shows knowledge of the Arab advance and the ensuing siege, but not of its outcome.[142] To be sure, the Romans are saved by divine intervention, but with no detail to suggest the knowledge of the actual events.[143] As the Arabs reach the city, it is said its citizens 'will be afflicted by the sword';[144] the text then asks: 'Woe, woe then. How will the orthodox faith of the Christians and the invincible power of the honourable and life-giving cross be overcome?'[145] The drama reaches its apex and in desperation, the Romans blaspheme, saying: 'Woe, woe, neither in heaven do we have a king nor on the earth.'[146] The Lord – 'the king in heaven' – finally shows himself, and his mercy and intervenes: 'And the Lord […] will set his fury against the sons of Hagar and upon the feet of Ishmael. And the Lord will lift up the cowardice of the Romans and put (it) into the hearts of Ishmael, and the courage of Ishmaelites into the hearts of the Romans.'[147] After that, 'the king in heaven' sends his earthly counterpart:

> the Lord will raise up a king of the Romans ['the king on the earth'], who people say is dead […] The Lord is raising this man in the outer country of Persia. This (is) his name: that which (begins with) the letter K of the alphabet. And this man is coming to the Seven-hilled city toward the evening. And he will prepare for enemies.[148]

Many scholars recognize Leo in these lines since he came from the east, and his baptismal name was Konon.[149] In the continuation of the narrative, the emperor and his two small boys wage a great war with the 'nation and the sons of Hagar,' and he reigns for thirty (or more) years in peace.[150] In the *Daniel Apocalypse*, then, the emperor is presented as a God-sent ruler, the established earthly counterpart to the ruler in heaven, to defeat the Arabs and usher in a period of conventional peace and prosperity. Although uncertainties concerning the evidence remain, such portrayal of Leo would generally

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[142] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §1. On this basis, Mango 1982, proposed the dating in winter of 716/17, which was accepted by Hoyland 1997, 297–9, and Kraft 2012, 228–31. Berger 1976, 33–7, and Zervos 1983, proposed a later date arguing that a translatio imperii to Rome (§7) refers to Charlemagne's coronation, and DiTommaso 2005, 130–41, also argued for a later date, recognizing the empress Eirene in the 'foul woman' who is prophesized to reign over the city (§6). These were rejected by Mango 1982, and Kraft 2012, 230 n. 81, 231 n. 87, who argued that the 'foul woman' is rather an ancient topos in prophetic literature representing 'personification of the sinfulness of the imperial capital'. Given the popularity of the genre, and the corrupt state of the manuscripts, I think it is possible to consider that the prophecy had been originally composed on the eve of the siege, but then extended or interpolated with the sections against the empress Eirene by some among many of her political enemies later. For one example of apocalyptic prophecy negative towards the empress see ch. 3.
[143] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §§3–4.
[144] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §3, tr. Zervos, 764.
[145] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §3, tr. Zervos, 764.
[146] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §3, tr. Zervos, 764.
[147] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §3, tr. Zervos, 764.
[148] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §3, tr. Zervos, 764.
[149] On Leo's name Konon, see Gero 1973, 13–24.
[150] *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §4, tr. Zervos, 765.

agree with the outlined association with Constantine IV, and the proposed discourse on Leo's reception into the city.

Defending the city: Leo III commanding the defence

Before looking at the portrayal of Leo III during the siege, it is necessary to discuss the problems with the surviving sources and outline the course of the siege. All the surviving traditions concerning the siege – the Byzantine, Arabic, Armenian, and more broadly the oriental Christian authors – contain legendary elements and are mostly later.[151] Among the Byzantine texts, the closest we get to contemporary evidence are the remnants of 'Trajan' in Nikephoros and Theophanes. Less concerned with historical detail but close to the event is the problematic letter of Pope Gregory II to Patriarch Germanos I (late 720s), recognized as genuine but containing an interpolation.[152] The iambic poem dedicated to the salvation of Constantinople from an Arab siege ascribed to Theodosios Grammatikos has been tentatively dated to the aftermath of 718, but the content of the poem is so vague and lacking historical references that it may well have been composed after the first Arab siege.[153] Finally, the *Synaxis* (referring here to the text read on the day of a special commemorative service for an event) preserved in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* commemorating the siege in 717/18 – for 16 August, *not* 15 August to which the Byzantine tradition unanimously ascribes the retreat of the Arab army – has clearly been edited to largely remove Leo from the picture, save for two brief mentions.[154]

The elaborate narrative about the siege preserved in the Armenian historical tradition,[155] although containing legendary aspects, is particularly important for the present

[151] Old but still useful study is Canard 1926. See also Guilland 1955, and Gero 1973, 32–43, with further references. For the Arabic sources, see Brooks 1899, and Bashear 1991, for an interesting material on Muslim Apocalyptic tradition predicting the conquest of Constantinople. For the oriental Christian authors, see the relevant sections in translation by Hoyland 2011, 209–15. For the Byzantine and Armenian texts, see further this chapter.

[152] Mansi XIII, 92C–100 A = PG 98, 147–56. Speck 1981, 155–78, analysed the text in some detail and concluded that it is an authentic letter with an interpolated section, which has been accepted by most scholars, see Pentcheva 2002, 16, n. 57, with further literature.

[153] The post-718 dating is based largely on stylistic and, to a less extent, thematic grounds, see Lampros 1884, 132–44, and Gero 1973, 172–6. Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 306, and Anderson 2011b, 50, accept the dating without further comments. The poem was clearly composed in the aftermath of an Arab siege of the city, but the historical data is meager, to put it generously. There is one reference to the black color of the Arab banners, Theodosios Grammatikos, 130.35–6, φλαμουλίων ἡ πυρότευκτος καὶ μελάντερος χρόα, which may be a relevant clue; on the importance of banners in the Arabic culture and early Islam, see Marsham 2009, 65ff., and 'Athamina 1989. There is also a passage, Theodosios Grammatikos, 130.39–131.44, suggesting that the Arabs too had fire-breathing ships, which is unattested in any of the sources for either of the two sieges. Otherwise, there is no mention of any historical figure, or more generally of an emperor, caliph, a patriarch, and not even the Theotokos, and the only two 'persons' referred to in the poem are Christ/God and Ishmael.

[154] At the very beginning of the siege, *SynaxCP*, 901.33–902.1, and slightly later, ibid., 902.16–8, relating that Leo offered a tribute to the Arabs to retreat.

[155] The most extensive treatment and the oldest tradition among these text is in the *History* of *Łewond*, 96–107 (Armenian text at odd page numbers with the facing French translation); Engl. tr. Arzoumanian, 109–13. See Greenwood 2012, who conducted important re-assessment and re-dating of the text, demonstrating that the surviving text is indeed authentic late-eighth or, perhaps late-ninth century chronicle, and not an eleventh-thirteenth century derivative from other Armenian texts devoid of historical value as previously argued by Gero 1973, 132–40. The other

study because it is believed to be based on a lost Byzantine tradition glorifying Leo, which Gero assessed as 'iconoclastic hagiography'.[156] He argued that the narrative depends on a Byzantine account, although containing elaborations in the process of assimilation, and further proposed it represents, at least in part, 'a lost iconoclastic *Synaxis* for August 15'.[157] In the course of this chapter, I too follow Gero's arguments and further propose that the first section of this narrative, containing the description of the triumphal procession, is most likely to be the closest to the lost Byzantine account, possibly representing the original *Synaxis* for August 15. It is noteworthy that in this section we find a testimony that as the Arab navy was approaching, Emperor Leo issued strict orders to bar all gates, to lock the chain on the Golden Horn, and that no one was to leave the city to engage with the enemy.[158] These acts are unattested in other sources, but would be measures expected in the face of a siege; more importantly, the earliest mention of the chain on the Golden Horn in Byzantine texts is in Theophanes in the very same context of the 717/18 siege, also distinctly connected with Emperor Leo.[159] Furthermore, one possible context for the transmission of the text would have been contemporary with Leo's reign. Namely, the transmission may be associated with the activity of Step'anos Siwnec'i and his circle, who resided in Constantinople between c. 712 and 728, as the last group belonging to the so-called 'Hellenistic School' – learned Armenians working on translations of various philosophical and theological works,[160] who were also behind the Armenian translation of Pseudo-Methodius' Apocalypse.[161] Although our knowledge of their activity and interaction with the Byzantine authorities is limited, we may reasonably assume that the group was larger than the three names that can be identified,[162] and that at least one among them had been invested with the honorific title of *hypatos* (Dawit' Hiwpatos),[163] as confirmed in manuscript evidence.[164] This would imply that the members of the group had a good standing at the court because *hypatos* was among the highest-ranking titles in the early-eighth century.[165] This would also agree with the much later, fourteenth-century testimony by Stephen Ōrbēlean, portraying Step'anos

sources containing the account of the siege are the *Universal History* by *Step'anos Tarōnec'i*, tr. Greenwood, 190–2, and *Anonymous Story-Teller*, tr. Thomson, 193–5, but both rely on Łewond.

[156] Gero 1973, 36–7.

[157] Gero 1973, 32–43, 134–8, 176–89, quotes at 189. Herrin 1987, 320–1, 335, and more recently Anderson 2011b, 49–50, endorsed Gero's arguments.

[158] Łewond, 102–3, and n. 517.

[159] Theophanes, 396. On this scene, see below, n. 184.

[160] Terian 1982, esp. 182–3. See also Gero 1973, 143–9, and Mahé 2015, 352, n. 44.

[161] Bonura 2016.

[162] These are Step'anos Siwnec'i, Grigor K'ahanay Ayrivanec'i, and Dawit' Hiwpatos, Terian 1982, 182.

[163] Terian 1982, 182.

[164] Gero 1973, 147–8.

[165] On the title ranking, see Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 593. One seal of a 'David *hypatos*', dated to the eighth century on stylistic grounds, has survived, *ZV*, no. 1848, although we cannot conclude whether it belonged to the Armenian Dawit' Hiwpatos or not.

Siwnec'i and his associates being well received by Emperor Leo and Patriarch Germanos.[166] In any case, the siege of Constantinople was a major event not just for the Byzantines, and the group simply being present inside the city during the siege could have been reason enough for them to make a record of the event, or in accordance with their primary activity, to translate a Byzantine one.

Following our imperfect sources, the events concerning the siege can be summarized as follows. The siege lasted for about a year, from the summer of 717 to mid-August 718. While the preserved numbers may be exaggerated, the Arabs clearly came with a huge army and navy.[167] There is no record of an Arab attempt to storm the walls, but the oriental sources record that the Arabs had been equipped with catapults,[168] while the Byzantine chronicles record two naval battles.[169] Some kind of negotiations seems to have taken place before and/or during the siege between Leo and the general Maslama, with Leo possibly offering a tribute to the Arabs to retreat,[170] but the accounts are fraught with clearly legendary aspects.[171] From the *Synaxarium of Constantinople*, we learn that the Arabs tried in vain to provoke the defenders into the open by devastating structures outside, performing religious ceremonies around the walls, and even proclaiming a Byzantine criminal as the new emperor, mimicking Byzantine ritual.[172] All accounts are unanimous that the winter of 717/18 had been extraordinarily long and harsh, causing much distress to the besieging army, which was reduced to extreme measures due to the famine,[173] but it is seems that the Byzantines suffered as well, despite considerable preparations.[174] In the spring of 718, two fleets from Egypt arrived with reinforcements in arms and provisions for the Arab army, but the Egyptian crews switched sides one night allowing the Byzantines to burn or capture a significant portion of supplies.[175] Finally, the Byzantine diplomacy managed to ensure important support from the Bulgarians, who harassed the Arab foraging parties and inflicted several defeats on them.[176] Eventually, the Arabs retreated, or began retreating, around 15 August 718 – the feast

[166] Gero 1973, 143–9.
[167] Byzantine chroniclers, Nikephoros, §52, and Theophanes, 395, put the number of Arab ships at 1 800. Oriental sources provide more detailed numbers of various sections, Hoyland 2011, 210, and put army total to 200 000 and 5 000 ships.
[168] Hoyland 2011, 210.
[169] See more details below, 19–20.
[170] *SynaxCP*, 902.16–18.
[171] Brooks 1899, 26–8, 31. Gero 1973, 32–4. Rochow 2001, 307–9. Łewond, 100, n. 509.
[172] *SynaxCP*, 902.19–26, and 903.15–22.
[173] The near-identical accounts in Nikephoros, §54, and Theophanes, 396, probably relying on 'Trajan', relate that the cold was harsh and that earth could not be seen for hundred days, causing distress for the Arabs who lost great number of men and animals. See also *SynaxCP*, 903.7–12; Łewond, 104–5; *Chronicle of 1234*, Hoyland 2011, 213–14. For the Arabic tradition on the winter, see Brooks 1899, 26, 28, n. 7.
[174] The *Chronicle of 1234*, tr. Hoyland 2011, 213, states that '[t]he Arabs outside the city and the Romans inside were in this critical state when winter came upon them with a vengeance', and according to the *SynaxCP*, 903.2–7, the city was 'hard pressed'.
[175] Nikephoros, §54. Theophanes, 397.
[176] Theophanes, 397–8.

of the Dormition of the Virgin;[177] while retreating, their navy may have suffered some losses in a storm, but it may as well be a Byzantine *topos* or at least an exaggeration, as there is no mention of any storm in Arabic accounts.[178]

Looking at the portrayal of Leo during the siege in Byzantine accounts, it is no surprise that the one derived from 'Trajan' is glorifying. The emperor participates personally in the defence, and takes prompt and decisive action in crucial moments with immediate positive outcomes illustrated in two major naval episodes. The first narrated naval victory in Nikephoros begins with: '[o]n seeing them [the slow-moving Arab ships caught in the contrary wind] the emperor embarked on biremes and, after breaking the enemy's line, burned twenty of their ships';[179] and similarly in Theophanes: 'straight away, the pious emperor sent against them the fire-breathing ships from the Akropolis and, with divine help, set them on fire'.[180] The description of the terrifying effects of the liquid fire follows and 'as a result, the inhabitants of the City took courage, whereas the enemy cowered with fear,[181] after experiencing the efficacious action of the liquid fire'.[182] Nikephoros briefly concludes that the remainder of the fleet left to winter in Sosthenion,[183] while Theophanes offers a few more details, including a reference to the mentioned chain, and inserts a divine intervention:

> But God brought their counsel to nought [Ps. 33:10] through the intercession of the all-pure Theotokos. That same night the pious emperor stealthily drew up the chain, the enemy, however, thinking that the emperor had drawn it aside with a view to entrapping them, did not dare move in and anchor on the inside of Galata. Instead, they sailed up to the bay of Sousthenion and made their fleet safe there.[184]

In the second major episode, the emperor organised a decisive assault after the Egyptian crew deserted to the Byzantines. Theophanes relates that:

> When the emperor had been informed by them of the two fleets hidden in the bay, he constructed fire-breathing siphons which he placed in dromones and biremes and sent these against the fleets. With God's help, thanks to the intercession of the all-pure Theotokos, the enemy were sunk on the spot.[185]

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[177] Nikephoros, §56. Theophanes, 399.
[178] Nikephoros, §56. Theophanes, 399. Hoyland 2011, 214–5. Brooks 1899.
[179] Nikephoros §54, tr. Mango, 123.
[180] Theophanes, 396, tr. Mango and Scott, 545.
[181] This *topos* seems to be employed consistently across literary genres; a very similar line appears in both apocalyptic texts, *Apocalypse of Daniel*, §3, *Greek Ps.-Methodius*, §13, and in Theodosios Grammatikos, 129.11–16.
[182] Theophanes, 396, tr. Mango and Scott, 545.
[183] Nikephoros, §54.
[184] Theophanes, 396, tr. Mango and Scott, 545.
[185] Theophanes, 397, tr. Mango and Scott, 546. Parallel passage in Nikephoros, §54.

The account from Nikephoros suggesting that the emperor has boarded a ship may be doubted; it would have been too risky, and Leo was not a naval commander, so I think the account in Theophanes describing the emperor only issuing the order seems more likely.[186] However, I think it is safe to conclude that the emperor made himself present around the city, and especially on the walls.[187] The portrayal of the new emperor during the siege as a courageous and decisive general is in line with the outlined ideal characteristics found in 'Trajan', and we may assume that the imperial chancery made sure that this image of the emperor personally leading the defence – perhaps with a tendency for exaggeration – was being communicated to a wider audience.

Supernatural protection: The Cross and the Theotokos

As Gero has noted, the Byzantine chroniclers are 'conspicuously silent about any actions the emperor and the clergy may have taken to supplicate the Deity'.[188] That none were performed during the twelve or thirteen months of the siege is practically impossible considering how ubiquitous such acts otherwise are in siege contexts. With the exception of the first Arab siege (667–9) about which we know very little, for every other siege in this period, some form of supplication and/or use of sacred relics as instruments for channelling divine aid or as apotropaic devices, is attested: during the Avar-Persian siege of Constantinople in 626, Emperor Herakleios was away, but Patriarch Sergios, responding to the *khagan*'s provocation in front of the city, led a litany on the walls carrying the *acheiropoieta* of Christ, and had images of the Theotokos with the Christ child affixed on the western gates as apotropaic devices;[189] during the Arab siege of Nikaia in 727, icons of the church fathers were supposedly paraded on the walls;[190] during the siege of Constantinople by Thomas the Slav in 821, Emperor Michael II raised the battle standard on the roof of the Blachernai church opposite to the besieging army, while his

[186] Although if the emperor was confident in an easy victory against transport ships, he may have taken a risky step, personally boarding the ship.
[187] Leo was, after all, an experienced general, and imperial presence on the battlefield can greatly inspire the morale of the troops and the citizens. Moreover, Theophanes 502–3, tr. Mango and Scott, 686, reports that Emperor Leo V 'toured the walls encouraging everyone' in preparations for the arrival of the Bulgarian army under Krum in 813.
[188] Gero 1973, 34–6. Indeed, there is absolutely nothing on supernatural protection in Nikephoros, which either reflects 'Trajan', or is the result of Nikephoros' occasional classicizing aspirations, Mango 1990, 43, n. 3, 195, 200. As for the lines in Theophanes, 396–7, concerning the divine intercession of the Virgin and 'God's help' as crucial for victory, separated from Emperor Leo in an unusual construction, I fully agree with Gero 1973, 34–6, n. 9, that these lines have been inserted by Theophanes. See also Herrin 1987, 320–1.
[189] See Pentcheva 2002, 4–16, and Speck 2003, with detailed references. The use of the Virgin's icons in the processions during sieges in 626 and 717/18 was a matter of contention between the two scholars; Pentcheva 2002, made a strong case that no icons had been used in 626, and made a less convincing argument for 717/18. Speck 2003, acknowledged that there is no evidence for the use of icons in processions in 626, but disagreed when it comes to 717/18. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 91, n. 74, 140, n. 254, endorse Pentcheva's conclusions for 717/18 without question, and, surprisingly, with no mention of Speck's response.
[190] Theophanes, 405–6.

son Theophilos led the clergy and citizens in a litany around the walls carrying the 'victory-giving' relic of the True Cross and the *maphorion* of Theotokos – this assault may be a unique example in having no consecrated patriarch present;[191] finally, during the Rus' attack on Constantinople in 860, Emperor Michael III was away, but Patriarch Photios led a litany carrying the *maphorion* which he sunk in the sea supposedly causing a storm that destroyed the Rus' fleet.[192] These examples suggest that, first, some act(s) of supplication must have taken place in 717/18 as well; second, in the period between 626 and 821, both the Cross and the Theotokos' *maphorion* became relics of supernatural protection of the city when facing a siege; third, since the emperor was present in the capital in 717/18, he was probably the one leading the supplication procession, or at least sharing the lead with the patriarch, although we are frustratingly devoid of reliable evidence of ritual performances during a siege with both figures present in the capital.[193]

The only clues about possible supplication acts during the siege of 717/18 come from the problematic letter of Pope Gregory II to Patriarch Germanos (late 720s), and the Armenian History of Łewond. Responding to the information about the siege provided to him by Germanos, Pope Gregory praised the patriarch saying that:

> You led the front line of the battle as God himself showed you, by ordering the truly glorious and esteemed labarum to lead in the ranks of the kingdom of Christ, I mean the life-bringing cross, the great trophy of His Majesty against death, in which he outlined the four ends of the world, by marking it throughout with examples.[194] Next [you also ordered to be brought in the forefront] the holy image of the Mistress of all and truly pure Theometor [...].[195]

Leaving presently aside the issue of the letter containing an interpolated section and making no mention of the emperor, it is noteworthy that the relic of the cross is placed in the forefront, leading the Christians in battle, and that the salvation is also ascribed to the Theotokos, later referred to as the 'ally in battle',[196] suggesting that both played a role in the supernatural defence according to Patriarch Germanos' report. We find some

[191] Genesios, II, §5, 28.41–9; tr. Kaldellis, 34. The current Patriarch, Theodotos I Kassiteras (d. January 821?), PmbZ #7954, is not mentioned in the scene, and he may have already died, but the dating of both the assault and Theodotos' death is imprecise.
[192] When the attack occurred, the emperor Michael III was on a campaign against the Arabs. According to Logothete A, §131.257–73, the emperor managed to come back to the city and join the patriarch in leading the litany. According to Theophanes Continuatus, IV, 33, he did not. In his thanksgiving homily, Patriarch Photios, *Homilies*, no. IV, 47*–51*, 40–52, Mango 1958, 74–110, says that the whole city carried with him the Virgin's robe, but does not mention the emperor in any manner. *Brussels Chronicle*, 33.15–21, also records the attack and the salvation by the intervention of the Virgin, but does not mention the litany the patriarch, nor the emperor.
[193] The incident in the Church of the Holy Apostles in June 813, Theophanes, 501, can be added to 626 and 860 as another example of a patriarch performing a litany for victory while the emperor was away, about to face a barbarian army. This case is treated in ch. 3.
[194] Compare these lines with the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodios*, §9. Further below, nn. 365, 366.
[195] PG 98, 149 A–B; Engl. tr. Pentcheva 2002, 17. On the interpretation of these lines, see further Speck 1980, 171–2, id. 2003, 269–71, and Pentcheva 2002, 16–19.
[196] PG 98, 156 A.

parallels to this statement in the History of Łewond. Carrying the cross on his shoulders, Emperor Leo leads the patriarch, the senate and a multitude of people in a supplication procession, which concludes in the harbour of Julian/Sophia with a re-enactment of the Red Sea scene from Exodus 14:26–9. There, the emperor addresses a prayer for salvation to Christ and, emulating Moses, strikes the water with the standard of the cross leading to the destruction of the Arab fleet (similar to the act performed by Patriarch Photios in 860).[197] The relic of the cross is thus in the forefront, also described as an 'ally in battle' – probably a translation from Greek σύμμαχος, which was often used for the supernatural protectors, persons or instruments, especially during sieges[198] – but there is no mention of the Theotokos. It is noteworthy that the description of Emperor Leo carrying the cross on his shoulders finds a parallel in Rome in a similar context not long after. The *Liber Pontificalis* says that when Rome was under a threat from an attack by Aistulf, Pope Stephen II (p. 752–7) held a 'procession and litany' with the *acheiropoieta* of Christ: 'with the rest of the *sacerdotes* the holy pope bore that holy image on his own shoulders'.[199]

Examining the supernatural protection of the city in the crucial period of c. hundred years until the siege in 717/18 is made difficult because of the lack of evidence for the first Arab siege in 667–9. The role of the Theotokos in the Avar siege in 626, and its yearly commemorations firmly established her status as *the* supernatural protectress of Constantinople.[200] Although we are not as well informed about the status of the cross in this capacity, it is noteworthy that George of Pisidia retroactively accorded it a role in defeating the enemies in 626.[201] Importantly in the present context, the cross was established as protecting the empire against the Muslims in the Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius which reached Constantinople not long before the siege in 717/18,[202] and we find parallel passages in the letter of Pope Gregory.[203] Moreover, the survey of the sieges shows that in the period between 626 and 821, both the cross and the Theotokos' *maphorion* became relics of supernatural protection for the city under siege.

Accordingly, I think it is reasonable to conclude with Herrin that both the cross and the Theotokos had a place in supplication acts in 717/18.[204] The supplication procession

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[197] Łewond, 102–3; Engl. tr. Arzoumanian, 112.
[198] For the characterization of the Virgin as an ally in battle in two sieges, see for 626, Theodore Synkellos, *Historia brevis*, 111.48–9, where the Avars and the Persians retreat thanks to τῇ συμμαχίᾳ καὶ κραταιᾷ βοηθείᾳ τῆς πανυμνήτου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτοκου, and *SynaxCP*, ed. Delehaye, 873, καὶ τῇ τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου συμμαχίᾳ. For 717/8, see the title of the homily of Patriarch Germanos, 191, λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικὸς ἅμα καὶ εὐχαριστήριος εἰς τὴν ὑπεραγίαν δέσποιναν ἡμῶν θεοτόκον ὑπὲρ τῆς συμμαχίας αὐτῆς, and the mentioned letter of Pope Gregory II, PG 98, 156 A. In the edict of Emperor Justinian II to the Church of St Demetrios in Thessalonike from September 688, 5–6, the gift is offered as a thanksgiving to the saint for being the σύμμαχον in many wars.
[199] *Liber Pontificalis*, tr. Davis, 56.
[200] McCormick 1986, 74–5. Mango 2000. Pentcheva 2002, ead., 2006, 37–59.
[201] George of Pisidia, *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 73–81.
[202] *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodios*, §9. Crone 1980, 82. Moorhead 1985, 177–8. See below, 39–41.
[203] PG 98, 149 B; *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodios*, §9. See above, n. 194, and below, nn. 365, 366.
[204] Herrin 1987, 320–1, 335.

was probably led by Emperor Leo with the relic of the cross, accompanied by Patriarch Germanos with a relic of the Theotokos, perhaps the *maphorion*. Considering that these acts are almost always performed in response to the actions of the besieging army (as in 626, 821, 860), I think a litany around the walls seems most likely. If there was an 'excursion' outside the walls to the harbour, as described in Łewond and as performed in 860, I would propose this might have taken place when the Arab army already began retreating. In any case, whatever rituals may have been performed, I believe they gave grounds for ascribing the salvation of the city to the power of the cross and Theotokos in the aftermath, which eventually led to an 'intercessory feud', as I will explore further later in this chapter.

The significance of salvation in 718 and its ramifications

Although the Arab raids did not stop after the failed siege of Constantinople, the significance of the victory in 718 can hardly be overstated. Taking place after two decades or so of unbroken military dominance, the caliphate mobilized vast resources for the siege, arriving with a huge army and much confidence under the walls of Constantinople, resolved to effectively topple the Roman empire by fulfilling the prophesied goal – Bashear showed that the seventh and eighth century saw a surge of Muslim apocalyptic prophecies imbued with Prophet's authority in which the conquest of Constantinople 'figures as a central chain in pre-messianic events'.[205] The salvation of the capital of the Christian empire was nothing short of a miracle, especially considering that the defenders were aided by what could have easily been interpreted as divine intervention, in the first place a harsh winter and famine, and possibly a storm, too.[206] It is worth reiterating that the military success of the caliphate was the strongest 'argument' for claims of supremacy of Islam, an often occurring theme found in contemporary texts. The argument was invoked in the (unedited) polemical dialogue between a monk of the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab notable in the service of general Maslama, dated to c. 720,[207] and we find it in Łewond too;[208] in the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, the Arab advance towards Constantinople culminates with the proclamation: 'And Ishmael will cry out with a great voice, boasting and saying, *Where is the God of the Romans? There is no one helping*

[205] Bashear 1991, *passim*, quote at 201. Moreover, in the narrative of the siege preserved in Łewond, 96–7, tr, Arzoumanian, 109, the general Maslama vows to his brother the Caliph Sulaymān that he will make the empire disappear by 'destroying the city of Constantinople'. See also Germanos, Homily on Salvation, 194, §11.
[206] The storm is likely a later invention or spin, but the harsh winter and famine in the Arab camp is universally recorded.
[207] Hoyland 1997, 465–72, translation of pertinent sections at 467–9. See also Griffith 2001, and Roggema 2008.
[208] Łewond, 96–9.

them, for we have defeated them completely'.[209] Inversely, the victory in 718 was majorly important as a demonstration that God had not abandoned His people and His city, and more broadly of His authority and power: 'Christ has the strength for salvation!';[210] 'the empire of Christians remains unshaken'.[211] The siege was a major event not only for the caliphate and the Byzantines, but throughout the Mediterranean and further to the East, and can be considered a 'world event'.[212] During the first Arab siege of Constantinople, the 'prospect of the fall of the city sent shockwaves throughout the empire and probably cost Constans II his life',[213] and a very similar scenario repeated itself in Sicily in 718.[214] The evidence for the reception in the West is found in the aforementioned letter of Pope Gregory II and in the Spanish Chronicle of 741;[215] the *Martyrdom of the Sixty Martyrs of Jersualem* is the evidence of the importance assigned to it among the Syriac Christians under Arab rule,[216] and we finally have the extensive treatment of the siege in the Armenian historical tradition.[217]

There is thus evidence that the salvation from the Arab siege had a considerable impact on both internal and external affairs under Emperor Leo. Taking place at the very beginning of his reign, it seems that the successful defence provided important grounds for the promotion of Leo as defender of Christianity against the threat of Islam, not only among the Byzantines, but also outside imperial borders. In the Constantinopolitan context, the salvation was a proof of Leo's skills as a commander and, arguably more important, that he had divine approval to occupy the imperial throne. The siege was commemorated through various modes and media, arguably the most important being the already mentioned elaborate triumphal procession with the emperor performing the role of a new Moses, leading his people to salvation. This imperial promotion seems to have met with opposition from Patriarch Germanos. These two themes are explored in the rest of this chapter, beginning with the defender of faith ideology.

[209] Apocalypse of Daniel, §2, tr. Zervos, 764.
[210] Theodosios Grammatikos, 132.68: Ἔχει σθένος ὁ Χριστὸς εἰς σωτηρίαν.
[211] Germanos, Homily on Salvation, 198, §22, βασιλεία χριστιανῶν διαμένει ἀσάλευτος. See further pertinent passages in ibid., 193–4, §§9–11, and esp. 196–8, §§19–23; Theodosios Grammatikos, 129.1–130.25, 132.67–81; *SynaxCP*, 904.23–7; and Łewond, 106–7; tr. Arzoumanian, 113, which concludes with the defeated general Maslama proclaiming 'I was unable to fight against God'.
[212] See Richardson 2014, who investigated Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem and considered it a first 'world event'.
[213] Jankowiak 2013, 316.
[214] Nikephoros, §55; Theophanes, 398–9; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 77.
[215] Chronicle of 741, §38, tr. Martin 2007, §58.
[216] Originally composed in Syriac soon after Leo's death apparently, Gero 1973, 47, n. 11, 176–81; Huxley 1977; Caplony 1996, 353–9; Efthymiadis 2009.
[217] See above, n. 155.

Leo III as defender of Christianity

Throughout Leo's reign, we can detect that the empire's Christian identity was emphatically stressed and asserted beyond traditional expectations, which is not altogether surprising, considering the existential challenge from the rival polity and religion claiming to have received the final revelation, superseding Christian truth. Connected with this tendency is further evidence that Leo and his advisers worked on establishing and disseminating the image of the emperor as defender and leader of Christianity, as proposed by Gero and Magdalino.[218] This was of course a traditional role, but it seems to have been advertised more zealously under Leo specifically against the threat of Islam, and it may have been a platform for reaching potential Christian allies in resisting the caliphate and various Melkite communities living under Arab rule, especially in Syria-Palestine, which was the place of origin of Leo and several of his high-ranking associates. Leo was born and raised in Germanikeia in Northern Syria, and resided there probably at least until 694/5.[219] According to the Kitāb al-'Uyūn, Leo 'spoke correctly in Arabic',[220] 'hence *a fortiori* Syriac' as well.[221] The key ally of Leo in his rise to the throne, Artabasdos, and the future patriarch Anastasios both originated from the eastern fringes, perhaps also from Germanikeia, if Gero's conjecture is correct.[222] The well-documented case of Leo's loyal ally, the *patrikios* and *strategos* Beser, clearly shows that he was an Arab Christian. Interestingly, on his seals Beser continued to use Arabic alongside Greek,[223] and it is noteworthy that like Leo, Beser was denounced as 'Saracen-minded' by Theophanes.[224] Another high-ranking Arab Christian in Leo's service was the *hypatos* Yazīd, whose long carrier can be traced fairly securely through the abundance of surviving seals, as Glynias has demonstrated;[225] like Beser, Yazīd used Arabic alongside Greek on his seals.[226] Another figure is the *patrikios* and *strategos* Arsaber, who had adopted the Trinitarian invocation on his seals.[227] Finally, it is worth repeating that the arrival of the Ps.-Methodius Apocalypse in Constantinople is safely dated to the period just before Leo's ascension. All evidence put together suggests that Emperor Leo III maintained strong ties with the eastern provinces that he had built before becoming the emperor

[218] See Gero 1973, 45–7; Magdalino 2012.
[219] Gero 1973, 25–31.
[220] Tr. Brooks 1899, 21–2, n. 1. See the detailed examination of Leo's origins, including the pertinent questions of exposure to Arabic language and culture, Gero 1973, 1–31.
[221] Gero 1973, 127.
[222] Gero 1973, 28–9, n. 17. Artabasdos, PmbZ #632. Anastasios, PmbZ #285.
[223] For surviving seals, see *ZV*, nos. 2835a–b, and additional examples in Glynias 2017, 77–9, 82–3. For the career of Beser and some issues with possible multiple persons, see Gero 1973, 189–98; Griffith 1990; and PmbZ #1010.
[224] Theophanes, 414.
[225] Glynias 2017, 76–7, 85–8.
[226] *ZV*, nos. 1985a–c. Additional examples in Glynias 2017, 85–8.
[227] *ZV*, nos. 751–3, although we cannot be certain if he served already under Leo, or in the early years under his son Constantine V. See below, 36.

and that a considerable influence from the eastern fringes was brought to Constantinople under his reign.

The successful defence of the capital was an important basis for Leo's propagated role of defender of Christianity, since it was a major event not just for Constantinople, as outlined. Little over a year after the siege, refashioning of imperial imagery is attested on coins and seals cantering around the figure of the emperor and symbol of the cross. The most important evidence for the present purpose is the completely new type of silver coin, *miliaresion*, which was designed after and in competition with the Arab *dirhem*. It featured the cross potent on the obverse accompanied with the proclamation 'Jesus Christ Conquers!' (fig. 9).[228] Moreover, we have solid evidence that the coins travelled between the two polities, which implies that Leo waged an ideological war of coins similar to that of Justinian II. Furthermore, the Trinitarian formula became a standard invocation on imperial seals, but it was also placed before the *prooimion* proper of the law-code *Ekloge*.[229] In the same document, the subjects of the empire are identified with the adjective χριστοσημείωτον ('signified/marked by the sign of Christ'), which is a hapax legomenon, and must have been coined specifically for the *Ekloge*.[230] This evidence clearly suggests an increased accentuation of Christian identity under Emperor Leo, and his actions to an extent at least must be considered as a response to the challenges from the caliphate. In the immediate aftermath of the siege, Leo initiated the forced baptism of the Jews (c. 721/2).[231] Although this policy was unsuccessful, such policy reinforces a proactive position of Leo as a leader in the Christian world and would correspond with the proselytizing pressure from the caliphate, especially under 'Umar II (717–20).[232]

Broader evidence is found in non-Byzantine texts. The narrative of the siege in Łewond portrays Leo as asserting his position as 'the custodian of Christ's throne' in a letter-exchange with the Arab general Maslama.[233] The Georgian chronicle, tentatively attributed to Juanšer, has preserved a letter from Leo to the Georgian princes of Kakheti, related to an Arab assault in 736, in which the emperor invites the princes Mir and Arčil to be patient and resist the Arabs 'together with us, for the sake of the service of the

[228] See the detailed treatment of all the mentioned materials below, 33–7.
[229] See below, 36–7.
[230] Ekloge, prooimion, 93. Gero 1973, 53, n. 19, proposed that the expression may be refering to the baptism, connected with the baptism of the Jews. Further on the assertion and importance of Christian identity in the *Ekloge*, see Humphreys 2015, 101–5, 113–18, 127–9.
[231] Testimony in Theophanes, 401, recently discussed by Magdalino 2012.
[232] See the analysis in Magdalino 2012, 145–52. On the Islamization policy, see also Signes Codoñer 2013, 137–40, and specifically for 'Umar II, Mahé 2015, 360–1.
[233] Łewond, 100–1; tr, Arzoumanian, 111. The content of the letters can be considered as fictional composition for the purpose of promoting Leo, but it is possible that some letter-exchange did take place, Rochow 2001, 306–8.

Cross'.[234] An important, but problematic, evidence for the portrayal and reputation of Leo as defender of the Christian faith against the threat of Islam is the so-called Letter of Leo to 'Umar II, in which the emperor supposedly engaged in theological polemic with the caliph defending the crucial Christian dogmas like the divinity of Christ or the Trinity.[235] The letter is a fascinating piece of Christian-Muslim polemic with an incredibly complex transmission history; different versions of 'Umar's letter and Leo's response survive in numerous similar but not identical versions written in five languages – Armenian, Syriac, Latin, Arabic and Aljamiado – with additional evidence that a Greek version was the basis for the Armenian translation at least.[236] Gero argued for the historicity of *a* letter-exchange between the two monarchs, testimony of which has survived independent of the letters, and proposed further that 'at any rate, Leo did commission the writings of an anti-Muslim apology, and probably took good care that his new role as literary *defensor fidei* should become known among his own subjects, as well as among Christians under Arab rule'.[237] I endorse Gero's proposal, however, since the historicity of the letter-exchange and especially of the surviving text remains highly contested, and has been recently rejected altogether,[238] it is necessary to present the data in some detail before proceeding to the content of the letter and its relevance to the present theme.

Leo III as defender of Christianity: The 'Letter of Leo to 'Umar'

First it should be stressed that, contrary to earlier conclusions, scholars in the field of diplomatic relations nowadays assert that the Arab invasion in the early eighth century did not end the diplomatic contact between the two polities, nor even reduce it.[239] Indeed testimonies of a letter-exchange between Caliph 'Umar and Emperor Leo are preserved in several independent sources belonging to different historical traditions (Greek,

[234] Translation with the comments on the reliability of this information and further references in Gero 1973, 150–2.
[235] Gero 1973, 44–7, 153–71. Mahé 1996, id. 2015. Greenwood 2009, id. 2012. Palombo 2015.
[236] For a detailed overview of all the extant versions except Syriac, see Palombo 2015, 237–46. Focusing more on the Armenian tradition, but including the Syriac and comparisons with the Arabic, see Mahé 2015. For the evidence of Greek version being the basis of the Armenian, see below, n. 254.
[237] Gero 1973, 46–7, quote at 47. Magdalino 2012, developed Gero's argument focusing on Leo's policy of the forced baptism of the Jews.
[238] By Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 115, and Palombo 2015. See the following pages.
[239] Kaplony 1996, 201–41. Rochow 2001, 310–2. Drocourt 2010, 37–8. Greenwood 2012, 160–1.

Arabic, and Armenian).[240] Theophanes writes that '['Umar] composed a letter concerning religion addressed to the emperor Leo in the belief that he would persuade him to convert',[241] while Agapius preserves a more elaborate testimony:

> He ['Umar] wrote a letter to King Leo calling on him to convert to Islam and disputing with him on matters of religion. Leo replied countering 'Umar's arguments, made clear to him the falsity of his doctrine and demonstrated to him the truth of Christianity with proofs from the revealed books, rational analogies and extracts from the Qur'an.[242]

We can see that Agapius presents a much more positive image of Leo and since both clearly rely on the so-called eastern source, probably Theophilus of Edessa,[243] I fully agree with Gero that Theophanes deliberately excluded the section portraying Leo as defender of Christianity against the caliph – 'one can see easily why an account of such tenor could not be included in the iconophile source'[244] – especially since Theophanes later portrays Leo as 'Saracen-minded'.[245]

According to all testimonies of the letter-exchange, it was 'Umar who first wrote to Leo, trying to 'convert' him, which would follow the example set by the Prophet. It is important to stress that this motif was a powerful model to be emulated, and while it also became a topos and was mimicked in fictional letters, scholars working on diplomatic relations between Byzantium and the caliphate point to genuine examples of letters from caliphs inviting Byzantine rulers to convert to Islam, the most famous example being the one sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd to Constantine VI.[246] Importantly, Mahé noted the well-documented zeal for spreading Islam under 'Umar II, stressing that the caliph also wrote to

[240] Theophanes, 399, and Agapius, 502–3, tr. Hoyland 2011, 216, both rely on a common source, probably Theophilos of Edessa. Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 105, states that 'this is the transcript of the answer that Emperor Leo wrote and sent to Caliph 'Umar of Ismael by one of his trusted servants', and, ibid., 70–2, which indicates that the two monarchs had already exchanged letters before, some on 'worldly affairs' – note the translation correction made by Greenwood 2012, 160, n. 257; see also Mahé 2015, 360. A very similar, but not identical testimony is preserved by T'ovma Arcruni, the reference with Fr. translation and discussion about the problematic textual relationship in Mahé 2015, 349–51, and n. 31. For the testimony preserved in the work of the ninth-century Arabic scholar al-Mubarrad, see Gero 1973, 45, n. 6, and in more detail Kaplony 1996, 223–5, 228–9.
[241] Theophanes, 399, tr. Mango and Scott, 550. Gero, 1973, 44, thought that Theophanes' text attempts to present Leo being converted by 'Umar's arguments.
[242] Theophanes, 399, tr. Mango and Scott, 550. Agapius, ed. Vasiliev, 503, tr. Hoyland 2011, 216.
[243] The testimony of the letter is preceded in both texts by the notice of the earthquake in Syria and 'Umar II's anti-Christian measures, Theophanes 399, Agapius, 502–3, Holyand 2011, 215–16.
[244] Gero 1973, 44–5. For a different interpretation, see Palombo 2015, 233–5, who acknowledges the *damnatio memoriae* of Leo in Byzantine literature, but then takes the lack of mention of Leo's response in Theophanes as a 'remarkable detail' to support the hypothesis that no letter-exchange took place arguing that Theophanes had a more limited information than Agapius, ibid., 249, 260–1.
[245] Theophanes, 405.
[246] See Drocourt 2010, 38, and nn. 39–43, with further examples and references.

the princes of Transoxiana urging them to convert.[247] To conclude, the majority of scholars nowadays recognize the letter-exchange between 'Umar and Leo as historic,[248] and I endorse this conclusion.

However, we are far from a consensus regarding the authenticity of the transmitted texts, which will no doubt remain a controversial topic. Recently, Palombo rejected the historicity of both the letter exchange itself and the letters, arguing that the original documents of both 'Umar's letter and Leo's response were composed at the same time in Arabic by a Christian (or Christians), in the milieu of the Melkite communities of Syria-Palestine in the late-eighth or in the early-ninth century.[249] She advances compelling arguments that the language in the Arabic version of the letter of Leo shows signs of being composed by a Christian, but fails to convince the reader that there is no evidence for a Byzantine tradition, and especially that the Armenian version preserved in Łewond was not based on a Greek text, which is crucial for her broader argument.[250] On the other hand, a growing number of scholars consider that the text(s) could be genuine or preserve traces of an authentic document, with distortions occurring during transmission and translation.[251] In this regard, the Armenian version surviving in Łewond, which claims to be a copy of Leo's letter,[252] deserves special attention for the following reasons. First, Mahé's careful analysis of similar passages between different versions has shown that, while there are clear parallels, there are considerable differences too, enough indeed for Mahé to assert that there is not enough evidence to claim that the version in Łewond is in direct relation to other extant versions.[253] Second, Mahé and Greenwood, building on the earlier work of several scholars, have demonstrated conclusively that the Armenian version had been translated from Greek, and not composed in Armenian as Gero previously argued.[254] Third, the internal evidence from Leo's letter in

[247] Mahé 2015, 360–1, with additional proselytising measures under 'Umar II.
[248] Gero 1973, 46. Kaplony 1996, 207–37. Rochow 2001, 309–11. Drocourt 2010, 36–8. Mahé 2015, 361. On the other hand, Palombo 2015, 233, doubts that any letter-exchange ever took place, although without advancing any arguments for this position, or engaging with arguments by other scholars, other than her overarching conclusion that all the surviving versions of the letter-exchange, and hence also the reports of the exchange, depend on a pseudo-composition of the documents.
[249] Palombo 2015. See also Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 115, n. 143, who express extreme doubt in authenticity of the reports about the letter-exchange or the surviving text(s) being anything but pseudo composition.
[250] See the examples below, n. 254.
[251] Newman 1993, 46; Kaplony 1996, 207–37, esp. 209; and Greenwood 2009, id. 2012, 154–61. Hoyland 1994, and Rochow 2001, 309–11, are more reserved, while Mahé 2015, esp. 352 and 361, rejects that the surviving texts represent authentic correspondence, but admits the possibility that some details could be.
[252] Mahé 2015, 372, n. 1.
[253] Ibid., 345–6, 352–6. Looking at the Arabic version, ibid., 352–6, Mahé concludes that we cannot assume that the letter was composed originally in Arabic and then translated to Greek and Armenian, which is the position argued by Palombo 2015, esp. 251ff.
[254] Gero Leo III, 164–71. Mahé 1996, 124–5, expanded in id. 2015, 347–8, convincingly rejected Gero's arguments as being 'contre toute raison'. Greenwood 2009, 203–5, id. 2012, 157–8, detected additional evidence of Greek original, and demonstrated more broadly that Łewond is not a later derivative as Gero believed – the fact that had considerably affected his argument. Palombo 2015, 246–8, dismissed the Greek model for the Armenian translation – following Gero exclusively – which is a very important point for her overall argument, because it confirms in her mind the lack of evidence for the Byzantine origin of the document, but is overall, one of the weaker aspects in her

Łewond does not contradict a mid-eighth century dating of the presumed Greek source, and there is further evidence that at least some sections belong to the early eighth century, i.e., the period of the respective interlocutors.[255] Finally, Mahé noted that the Armenian version of the letter shows features in common with the aforementioned Armenian group of translators present in Constantinople in the early eighth century,[256] a context for transmission contemporary with Leo III's reign. Greenwood asserted that since the letter of Leo in Łewond has indications of being genuine, it is 'fully deserving of sustained study' among other reasons as 'a vitally important witness to Christian-Muslim relations at the start of the 8th century'.[257] I have followed this line of thought, and, for my part, investigated the letter in comparison with authentic documents, and/or broader policies and context of Leo's reign, looking for shared themes and attitudes.

The letter is a religious polemic and the choice to name the emperor Leo in the protocol as the 'servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, our true God and sovereign of those who know him' sets well the tone of the letter.[258] The two primary concerns of the letter are defending and asserting the divinity of Christ[259] and the Trinitarian doctrine.[260] Additionally, several other themes are discussed in comparably less space, such as defending the veneration of the cross and images,[261] idolatry,[262] or the Christian ethics of marriage.[263] The text makes assertions of Christ's supremacy,[264] that His coming was announced by the prophets,[265] and about His divine and terrestrial lineage, confirming Christ's legitimacy.[266] The long section devoted to Christ concludes with a seemingly explicit response to a Muslim claim: 'it seems that it is only the truth that you evade, […] so as not to recognize our Lord as God, confessing Him always as a mere man'.[267] The Trinitarian dogma is defended implicitly and explicitly throughout the letter. Much space is devoted to the Holy Spirit as an essential element in confirming that the prophetic and

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otherwise careful study. First, she (ibid., p. 247) imputes collectively to all scholars arguing for Greek, that their basis is really an assumption that letter must have been genuine in the first place; this is demonstrably not the case, especially for Mahé. Second, among other scholars, she makes references to earlier titles by Mahé (1996) and Greenwood (2009) (ibid. 246, n. 87), but addresses, and tries to refute by referring to Gero, only one of their arguments in favor of Greek, the 'Hellenized' version of Biblical names, but does not mention the obvious literal translations from Greek and other references in the letter prioritizing Greek over Armenian adduced by Mahé 1996, 124–5, and Greenwood 2009, 204–5.

[255] See especially Greenwood 2012, 158–61, and Mahé 2015, 348–52, 357–9. See further evidence introduced in this chapter, 30ff. Palombo 2015, makes no attempt to compare the content with any of the existing texts or more generally with the context earlier than the late-eighth century.

[256] Mahé 2015, 352.

[257] Greenwood 2009, 206.

[258] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 72. See further on the importance of the protocol below, 33-5.

[259] Especially at Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 85–95.

[260] The defence of the Trinity is present throughout the letter, and explicitly at Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 83–4.

[261] See below, 32-3.

[262] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 80, 84–5, 87–8, 102–3.

[263] Ibid., 101–2.

[264] Ibid., 85. Compare with the lines in Theodosios Grammatikos, 132.68–70.

[265] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 85–7.

[266] Ibid., 88–9.

[267] Ibid., 94.

apostolic books had been divinely inspired (through the Holy Spirit) and did not corrupt the divine word due to human nature being susceptible to seduction of Satan.[268] As with Christ, a seemingly direct response is made with regards to the Trinity: 'we are accused by you of confessing three gods'.[269] These are standard themes of Christian-Muslim polemics, but the testimony does not contradict the early dating because the claims to which the emperor responds were current at the time of Leo and made public not least through the inscriptions on the walls of the Dome of the Rock and Umayyad coinage, and do appear in other contemporary polemics.[270] Moreover, such an imperial response is essentially in accord with the messages stamped on Byzantine coins and seals after 720, proclaiming Christ's victory and invoking the Trinity.

Potentially more telling is the ethical issue of marriage, which finds parallels in the *Ekloge*. The extraordinary importance accorded to the issue of marriage in the *Ekloge* is highlighted by its very position in the code, as it comes immediately after the *prooimion*, by the level of attention given, and the changes introduced compared to Justinian's model.[271] As the remainder of the *Ekloge*, the issue of marriage is heavily dominated by the scriptures and Humphreys concludes that the new law brought 'a fundamental re-conception of marriage as a quintessentially Christian institution, rather than the classical Roman idea of a private contract'.[272] The question of ethics of marriage in the letter of Leo to 'Umar is comparably short, but the language is particularly strong,[273] and it includes a line on divorce stressing that 'in the Gospel God has commanded the husband not to divorce the wife save for the cause of adultery' [Matthew 19.3–9][274]: this is the same stipulation as introduced in the *Ekloge*, supported with the same reference.[275] This parallel alone does not imply that there is necessarily a connection, nor prove the early dating of this section of the letter, but at least it allows for such assumption, especially in combination with other details. The early dating, for example, is implied by the comment of the emperor Leo that 'it has been a hundred years, more or less, since your religion [i.e. Islam] appeared', as the hundredth year of *hijra* fell within the regnal years of the caliph 'Umar II (r. 717–20).[276]

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[268] Ibid., 83, is another response to a claim that the Gospels and the books of the Prophets were considered as 're-composed by men', but see also ibid., 75, 77, 79, 80–2, 91, 96.
[269] Ibid., 83.
[270] For example, these themes are also invoked in the mentioned polemic between a monk of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab notable (c. 720), Hoyland 1997, 467–8.
[271] Humphreys 2015, 113–18.
[272] Ibid., 115.
[273] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 101, the author refers to the polygyny practiced by Muslim men as 'the abominable authorization given you by your legislator [i.e. Muḥammad] to have an affair with your wives which he has compared, I am ashamed to say, to the tilling of fields'.
[274] Ibid., 101.
[275] *Ekloge*, §2.9.1, 272–7, §2.9.2, 283–5.
[276] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 81. That the text encompasses multiple layers is clear from a 'counter-information' not long after (Ibid., 81) that 'it is now eight hundred years, more or less, since Christ appeared'. Mahé 2015, 351–2,

Another passage that has been frequently suggested as evidence for an early dating is the attitude towards the holy images. The letter first defends the cross as an object of veneration '[w]e honour the cross because of the sufferings of the incarnate Word of God borne thereon, as we learned from a commandment given by God to Moses, and from the message of the Prophets'.[277] In contrast, the images are said not to be offered equal respect:

> As for pictures, we do not pay them like respect […] We have, however, in the Old Testament the divine command which authorized Moses to have the figures of the Cherubim in the tabernacle as witnesses. Likewise we […] have always felt a desire to conserve their [the apostles'] images […] Having them [their images] in front of us, we joyfully glorify God […] But as for the wood and the colours on it, we do not give them reverence.[278]

Meyendorff pointed out that such detached support for the images and a much more pronounced attitude in defence of the veneration of the cross fits the mind-set at the court in the period before the inception of Iconoclasm, and would not be at odds with the attitudes expressed by the patriarch Germanos.[279] He concludes that 'neither the Iconoclasts, nor the Orthodox were capable, at a later date, of adopting towards the images so detached an attitude'.[280] Meyendorff's assessment remains valid today, and it can be expanded if we include contemporary Syriac polemical literature, particularly relevant because of the background of Emperor Leo and his close advisers. The already mentioned polemical dialogue between a monk of the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab notable in the service of general Maslama composed in c. 720,[281] exhibits similarly detached support for images, focusing much more on defending the cross and stressing its victory-giving power.[282] Slightly different, as it is an anti-Jewish polemic, is the so-called *Disputation of Sergios the Stylite with a Jew*, dated to c. 700. It gives more attention to the images, but they are never said to be worthy of worship, which is indeed accorded to the cross, defended at much greater length.[283] In conclusion, if the text surviving in the chronicle of Łewond originates from a Byzantine context, the attitude towards the holy

proposed that the first statement may belong to the original letter, while the second could be associated with the composition of Łewond, which Mahé dates to the end of the eighth century.

[277] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 99.

[278] Ibid., 99–100.

[279] Meyendorff 1964, 127.

[280] Ibid., 127. Greenwood 2012, 159–60, endorsed Meyendorff's conclusions.

[281] Hoyland 1997, 465–72. Griffith 2001. Roggema 2008. Signes Codoñer 2013, 180–1.

[282] Hoyland 1997, 468. Griffith 2001, 46, n. 51, 48, n. 57. Signes Codoñer 2013, 180–1.

[283] I did not have access to the published edition (Hyaman 1973), but I could consult the passages in Hyaman's PhD, which was the basis for the edition. Compare the sections dedicated to the cross, Hyaman 1968, V §§1–15, continuing in VI §§1–7; X §2; XII §§1–14, with those dedicated to the images, XIII §1, XVI §§3,19–21, and XVII §§1–2, 9. See also the summary on the treatment of images by Signes Codoñer 2013, 181–2.

images could have only been expressed in the period before the inception of the iconoclast controversy, agreeing with the period when the letter-exchange supposedly took place, c. 718–20. Moreover, although many have commented on the attitude towards images in the letter, no one seems to have addressed the attitudes towards idolatry expressed on several occasions.[284] Addressing the three stages that mankind must pass to reach a 'most truthful knowledge of God', according to the Prophet Daniel, it is said that '[f]irst, mankind shall come out of the shadow of idolatry, and shall arrive at a certain degree of knowledge under the light of the Law'.[285] Further, as an illustration of Christ's dominance over all nations, the text invokes His triumph over the Moabites – the topical idolaters of the Old Testament – punished specifically on account of this sin which stands for Satan.[286] Importantly, recounting men's fall from grace, idolatry is the principle cause, described as 'the first and the last of all iniquities'.[287] In the letter, therefore, the emperor Leo expresses an Old Testament position against idolatry as the worst of iniquities, that leads to the ultimate fall and incurs divine wrath, which is exactly the attitude that led Leo to initiate Iconoclasm according to Byzantine texts,[288] and which is now recognized and accepted in scholarship.[289]

Further potential traces of the original source, relevant both for an early dating and the defender of faith ideology, may be found in the protocol, which received barely any attention in the scholarship on the letter.[290] It reads: 'Emperor Flavian Leo, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, our true God and sovereign of those who know him, to 'Umar, chief of the Saracens'.[291] As mentioned, the tone of the protocol corresponds well with the polemical content of the letter, and there are certain similarities with the poem of Theodosios Grammatikos which may hint at the correlation with the siege of Constantinople.[292] Moreover, the protocol is unique to Łewond, and crucially different from the one preserved in the Arabic version of Leo's letter which reads: 'From Leo, Emperor of the Romans, to 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Commander of the Faithful: Peace'.[293] I think we

[284] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 80, 84–5, 87–8, 102–3.
[285] Ibid., 80. This line is particularly interesting considering further developments under Emperor Leo. See below, 33.
[286] Ibid., 87–8.
[287] Ibid., 84–5.
[288] See especially Nikephoros, §60. Theophanes, 404–5.
[289] Gero 1973, 94–112. Herrin 1987, 307–43, esp. 334–5. Auzépy 2008, 279–82. Magdalino and Nelson 2010, 20. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 79–80.
[290] Mahé 2015, 353, is the only scholar to my knowledge who commented on the general importance of the protocol, using it as a counter evidence to the arguments that the text in Łewond is a forgery, but he does not deal with the aspects further discussed here.
[291] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 72.
[292] Compare the formulation 'the Lord Jesus Christ, our true God and sovereign of those who know him', with lines in Theodosios Grammatikos, 130.17–9, introduced as a consequence of Christ's victory over the Ishmael, i.e. Arab defeat at the walls of Constantinople, ἐγνώρισάς σου τὴν σοφὴν ἐξουσίαν / ἐναντίον σε, Χριστὲ, τῶν οὐκ εἰδότων / θεὸν κραταιὸν ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς λόγου, 'you made known your wise authority / Christ, that you yourself are the enemy of those not knowing / you are the mighty God from God, father of the *Logos*'.
[293] Tr. Swanson 2008, 377.

can safely conclude that the protocol preserved in Arabic cannot have been the choice of an early-eighth century Byzantine emperor,[294] but the one in Łewond could. It is the use of the praenomen Flavius and the choice of epithets that strongly imply an early-eighth century context and origin of the protocol.

Flavius was an ancient Roman gens name used by numerous Byzantine emperors,[295] notably, by Justinian I in his lengthy titulature.[296] Angold notes that the *praenomen* had been widely adopted by high-ranking men under this ruler,[297] but in the more recent imperial context, it was used exclusively by members of the Herakleian dynasty.[298] The last emperor of the dynasty, Justinian II, was also the last to use the title, attested in his edict from September 688.[299] After Justinian II,[300] the *praenomen* is not attested in Byzantine texts in the imperial context except for a sole example under Leo VI, and disappears thereafter.[301] This is a significant detail, because it seems extremely unlikely that either an Armenian author/translator or a member of the Melkite community in Syria-Palestine would have invented such a detail, especially in the late eighth or early ninth century – the proposed alternative date for the composition – when the *praenomen* had already fallen out of use in Byzantium. Finally, the use of the *praenomen* Flavius, and the presentation of Leo as 'servant of the Lord Jesus Christ', feature striking parallels with the rhetoric under Justinian II; the latter formula widely circulated through his *Servus Cristi* nomisma (fig. 1), and we have additional evidence for this juncture in the narrative of the siege preserved in Łewond. In the aforementioned letter-exchange leading to the siege, Leo replies to the insults and threats of the general Maslama, warning him that 'the Lord […] will shut your blasphemous mouth that you opened against the King of kings, his city, the temple dedicated to the glory of his name, and against me, the custodian of Christ's throne'.[302] This line may even be regarded as a verbal rendering of Justinian II's *nomisma*, with the 'king of the kings' title referring to Christ in the text corresponding perfectly to the *rex regnantium* title of Christ on the obverse of the coin, and the characterization of Leo as the 'custodian of Christ's throne' conveying a very similar message as Justinian's portrait entitled *Servus Cristi* on the reverse – the designation adopted directly in the protocol of the letter. This continuity

[294] This protocol, however, would fit the interpretations proposed by Palombo 2015.
[295] The Greek spelling of the nomen varies, the most common seems to be Φλάβιος and Φλαΰϊος.
[296] See for example Justinian I's edict of 551, Schwartz 1939, 72.
[297] Angold 2010, 13.
[298] Already Herakleios himself used it, *Chronicon Paschale*, 703, as well as his son Constantine III, PmbZ #3701. Flavius was also the baptismal name of Constans II, PmbZ #3691.
[299] Vasiliev 1943, 5, τῆς ὅλης οἰκουμένης δεσπότου φλαυίου ἰουστινιανοῦ... See also PmbZ #3556.
[300] It is noteworthy that the *asecretis* Flavios Artemios stopped using the praenomen Flavios after becoming the emperor Anastasios II (r. 713–15), PmbZ #236, perhaps to avoid association with Justinian II?
[301] Leo VI, *Novells*, §1, 11, αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Φλάβιος Λέων.
[302] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 111.

would not be surprising, considering that the letter would have been composed between six and nine years after Justinian II's deposition.[303] Accordingly, I would argue that the protocol preserved in Łewond is authentic, or at the very least, it was based on an authentic document going back to the early eighth century. This would be another indication that the letter itself may be genuine, as Greenwood argued.

Coming back, at last, to the theme of defender of the faith, the demonstrable connection with imperial ideology under Emperor Justinian II in the early period of Leo's reign is significant. Although Justinian did suffer a bad reputation as a tyrant among parts of the elite in Constantinople, this needs not to have been the case among the broader population, nor indeed extended far from the capital,[304] and in any case the ideological currents of his response to the Arab threat could have been appealing to Leo and his associates, that is, to a broader Christian and anti-Muslim audience. As outlined, Justinian led an aggressive policy against the caliphate, waging war on the battlefield, and engaging in the ideological warfare of images by advancing strong assertions of Christianity through medium of gold coins, and we have solid evidence that Leo continued essentially the same ideological war through the medium of silver coinage. More broadly, just as Justinian's aggressive policy was a response to the development in the caliphate, I think we should consider the letter portraying Leo as defender of Christianity as part of the reaction to the pressure on the Christian communities within the caliphate to convert during the reign of 'Umar II.[305] In this context, I do believe it is possible that a highly politicized letter-exchange between 'Umar II and Leo III took place, and that in this context – to return to Gero's argument – 'Leo did commission the writings of an anti-Muslim apology, and probably took good care that his new role as literary *defensor fidei* should become known among his own subjects, as well as among Christians under Arab rule'.[306] In view of the pressure from the caliphate, and demonstrable ties with the Melkite communities under emperor Leo, especially among the Syrian Christians, I think we can consider this portion of the population as the important target audience of the letter beyond the imperial borders, in whichever form it may have circulated. Moreover, the unsuccessful siege of Constantinople played an important role in this. The claims in defence of the Christian faith and might of the Christian God advanced in the letter, firmly stated already in the protocol, would have received a solid backing from the defence of Constantinople, con-

[303] We may consider also the practical aspect, namely that the members of the imperial chancery probably did not change dramatically in such a short period.
[304] As mentioned, 4–5, the composition of Ps.-Methodios' Apocalypse might have been used in part as an encouragement for Justinian II to attempt a reconquest.
[305] See above, n. 232.
[306] Gero 1973, 46–7, quote at 47.

sidered indeed as a demonstration of the divine will and the power of Christ. It is significant that the most hostile anti-Muslim attitude among the Syrian Christians is expressed in a text situated in the aftermath of the defence of Constantinople and full of praise for Emperor Leo,[307] which testifies to the prestige and heroic status the latter had acquired and the existence of a receptive pro-Leo/anti-Arab audience.[308] Finally, considering that the emperor himself knew Arabic, and that at least two of his high-ranking courtiers were Arab-Christians who found it useful or necessary to continue using Arabic on their seals (which implies that they were exchanging letters with Arabic-speakers), I think an even broader audience within the caliphate should be considered. Accordingly, even the composition of the Arabic version of the letter could have been accomplished during Leo's reign, if there was a need for it, but such speculation must wait for the editio princeps of the Arabic version of Leo's letter and further studies.

Before moving forward, I want to stress further the implications and value of Leo's letter to 'Umar as preserved in Łewond possibly being authentic. As Mahé has shown, a considerable body of texts needed to be consulted in the preparation of the letter,[309] which implies that a number of Constantinopolitan scholars conducted the research, prepared the dossier and constructed the theological arguments. This means that Leo and his advisers were intensely exposed to and engaged with the arguments challenging some of the Christian doctrines as posed by the Islamic theologians. Among other themes, this also includes the attitudes towards the cross, the images, idolatry and marriage, the themes that gained more prominence only in the later period of Leo's reign especially with the inception of Iconoclasm and the promulgation of the *Ekloge*.[310] The aforementioned statement that 'mankind shall come out of the shadow of idolatry, and shall arrive at a certain degree of knowledge under the light of the Law',[311] in fact, aligns perfectly and in appropriate order with these developments. Furthermore, the process of preparing the letter would have left behind a sizeable florilegium, or dossier, on which the emperor and his advisers could draw later. This would be one possible explanation for parallels in attitudes and ideas between the letter and later documents (broadly construed) of which we have evidence, such as the *Ekloge*,[312] the monument of the cross in front of the Chalke Gate,[313] or indeed messages disseminated through the redesigned imperial iconography on coins and seals. Considering that the new design was made public in March 720, the process of preparation may well have been going on at the

[307] *Martyrdom of the Sixty Martyrs of Jerusalem*, originally composed in Syriac soon after Leo's death apparently, see Gero 1973, 47, n. 11, 176–81, and Huxley 1977.
[308] Gero 1973, 47, n. 11.
[309] Mahé 2015, 357–9, 362–6.
[310] See above, n. 271.
[311] Arzoumanian, Łewond, 80.
[312] Above, nn. 274, 275.
[313] On this link, see Magdalino 2012, and below, 45-6.

same time as the preparation of the letter, or at least very soon afterwards, making a connection between the two processes highly probable.

The emperor and the Cross

That the emperor took personal charge of the successful defence of the city, and led the citizens in a supplication litany, no doubt raised his popularity at large, and signalled that he enjoyed divine favour. At the same time, it seems that it also alarmed those members of the élite that were in opposition, and Leo's reign experienced the first internal political crisis. Little over a year after the siege, the emperor had to face a plot in the name of the former emperor Anastasios II that involved several high-ranking officials inside Constantinople, the archbishop of Thessalonike, where Anastasios was residing, and initially, the Bulgarian khan Tervel.[314] The city, however, remained loyal to Leo, or in any case the conspirators failed to secure support for the plot; Theophanes records that when Anastasios marched on Constantinople 'the City did not accept him'.[315] After this failure, the Bulgarians changed their allegiance and surrendered the plotters to Emperor Leo who made a public statement; he had Anastasios and the archbishop beheaded in the Kynegion, and their heads paraded on a pole during the hippodrome races.[316] It is noteworthy, as Kaegi points out, that this was the first failed attempt at usurpation since 695, and that the capital would resist another in 727, when the revolt of the Helladic theme was repelled apparently with the involvement of the citizens.[317] This might have been a sign of recovery of some of the imperial authority that had crumbled over the previous decades filled with humiliating defeats and destructive usurpations of power. Nevertheless, the plot of Anastasios was a sound reminder that the new emperor still needed to secure his position. Not long after the plot, Leo's son Constantine was crowned co-emperor on Easter 720 (31 March).[318] With the coronation of his heir Constantine, Leo began establishing his own dynasty, and a substantial redesigning of the imperial symbols on both coins and seals took place. The design emulating the emperor Constantine IV was now abandoned, signalling that Leo also began establishing his own victorious image more confidently. The new designs are the earliest set of historical data that we can date fairly securely which are also unburdened with the uncertainties that plague the

[314] Nikephoros, §57, Theophanes, 400–1.
[315] Theophanes, 400, tr. Mango and Scott, 552.
[316] Additionally, other unnamed supporters of the plot were punished with slitting of noses, confiscation of property, and banishment. Nikephoros, §57. Theophanes, 400–1.
[317] Kaegi 1981, 213. Nikephoros §60, tr. Mango, 131, says that when the rebels came to capital 'the men of Constantinople joined battle with them and set fire to many of their ships'. The same testimony is in Theophanes, 405.
[318] Nikephoros, §58, and Theophanes, 401, present the patriarch merely present at the coronation, offering prayers and blessings, which seems like an attempt to dissociate the patriarch from the Iconoclast Leo. Brussels Chronicle, ed. Cumont, 31.19–20, however, states that it was indeed the patriarch Germanos who crowned Constantine in the Tribunal.

surviving literary sources. For this reason, I begin this section with the detailed analysis of the changes introduced on coins and seals with the coronation of Constantine in 720.

Evidence from seals and coins

Important changes in the medium of seals and coins include the 'double-bust' type on gold and copper coins, and early series of seals; a completely new silver coin, the *miliaresion* which became aniconic, laying stress on the symbol of the cross; a design very similar to miliaresion became the standard design of imperial seals, abandoning the image of the Virgin which had been the long-standing iconography.

While the obverse of the nomisma was left unchanged – a bust of Leo wearing a chlamys, a crown with a cross, holding a *globus cruciger* in the right and an *akakia* in the left hand with the formula 'D(omi)NO LEON(i) P(erpetuo) A(ugusto) MUL(tos Annos)'[319] –, the cros-potent was removed from the reverse to introduce the bust of Leo's heir Constantine (fig. 6).[320] The co-emperor's bust is that of an infant, but his regalia and formula *many years* are identical to that of the main emperor,[321] suggesting legitimate share in power, i.e. succession. Grierson notes that Leo III's 'double-bust' model was an innovation as junior colleagues had on both coins and seals traditionally been represented on the same side next to the main emperors[322] – the only example that can be considered as a possible iconographic inspiration is the *nomisma* of Justinian II from his second reign (705–11), that showed the bust of Christ on the obverse and that of the emperor on the reverse (fig. 7).[323] An early series of imperial seals of Leo III and Constantine V (720–4?), features a design identical to *nomisma*, probably using the same dies,[324] and the 'double-bust' design was employed on *folles* too, where the child-like bust of Constantine on the reverse was placed above a decorated bar, possibly representing him above the balcony in the Tribunal of the Nineteen Couches where his coronation took place, as proposed by Grierson, or perhaps at the Hippodrome.[325] The double-bust design across media placed strong emphasis on imperial figures and their au-

[319] DOC3.1, 229.
[320] DOC3.1, 229–30, 241–4, pl. I, nos. 3a.1–3f. Füeg 2007, pl. 50, nos. 3.B.2–3.k, dates the dies to 720–1.
[321] Formula on the reverse is DOC3.1, tr. Grierson 229–30, 'and Constantine many years'.
[322] DOC3.1, 227. The practice of depicting a junior colleague together with the main emperor can be traced back to the issues of Justin I and Justinian, DOC1, 57ff., pl. xii, nos. 1–7, but it becomes more prominent under Emperor Herakleios and his descendants, DOC2.1, 217 (summary of types), pl. viii–ix, nos. 8–45. See also Grierson 1999, 7–8.
[323] DOC2.2, pl. xliii, nos. 1.2–1.7.
[324] DOS6, 59–60, no. 29.1, with further literature. Comparing Constantine's bust on this seal, which is in a poor state, it seems possible that the dies match the *nomismata* series that Füeg 2007, 51, nos. 4.A–4.L, dates to 721–4.
[325] DOC3.1, 233, 255–9, pl. iii–iv, nos. 31–5.

thority, and we see this notion illustrated more explicitly in the surviving token which depicts the standing figures of emperors Leo III (obverse) and Constantine V (reverse) with three additional figures on each side bowing to the emperors (fig. 8).[326]

The more drastic changes were introduced with the completely new type of silver coin (*miliaresion*) and imperial seals which both became aniconic, featuring the very cross potent that had been removed from *nomismata* as the central design. On the obverse of the *miliaresion* there is an inscription in five rows, 'Leo and Constantine, emperors in God', and on the reverse, a cross potent on steps and a wreath border inscription in a mixture of Latin and Greek, 'Ihsus Xristus nica' – 'Jesus Christ conquers' (fig. 9).[327] Grierson further proposed that the new silver coin was at least initially ceremonial in character based on the imperial names given in the vocative; this invocation seems to imitate an acclamation that invites the response 'may you be victorious'.[328] Based on the sheer volume of surviving *miliaresia*, however, Grierson and other scholars agree that the coin must have been used in circulation as regular currency.[329]

Scholars have long since recognized that the design of the *miliaresion* was based on and in competition with the Arab *dirhem* – the two were of the same size, weight, very similar triple border and featuring aniconic design (fig. 10).[330] Moreover, a good number of *miliaresia* were struck over *dirhems* (fig. 11),[331] which is a testimony that the coins found their way to Constantinople, and we may assume they went in the opposite direction too. A coin competing with the *dirhem*, with the cross as its central design and 'Jesus Christ conquers' invocation introduced only eighteen months after the siege, in my mind, clearly refers to and draws from the 718 victory. Having in mind that the coins travelled between the two polities, and that a similar 'war of images' via gold coins manifested at the end of the seventh century, we can also consider the *miliaresion* as being part of religious polemic.[332]

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[326] DOS6, 60, no. 30.1
[327] DOC3.1, 227, 231–2**,** 251–3, pl., II–III, nos. 22a.1–23.
[328] DOC3.1, 64. Grierson further notes that until the reign of Emperor Theophilos, *miliaresia* were issued only in the names of both emperors, meaning they were struck only after the coronation of a co-emperor, DOC3.1, 63–4.
[329] Ibid., 63–4. Penna 1990, 113–14.
[330] DOC3.1, 62–3. Penna 1990, 111–15. Compare the *miliaresion* (fig. 9) with the example of a silver *dirhem* of 'Umar II (717–20), Wilkes 2015, 25, no. 241, (fig. 10).
[331] The beautiful example of a *miliaresion* struck over *dirhem* presented in fig. 11, was recently sold at the auction organized by *Leu Numismatik AG* (25 October 2017, lot 412), where the coin was identified as that of Leo III. However, although the *miliaresia* of Leo III and Leo IV are difficult to discern, following a careful analysis of all numismatic features, the scholars have established criteria for differentiating; see the summary with references in Penna 1990, 112–13. The two relevant aspects for the present case are that on the *miliaresia* of Leo III the length of the vertical lines at the end of the horizontal arms of the cross tend to be longer, and the top of the cross does not reach the border of the coin, compare the examples at DOC3.1, pl. ii–iii, nos. 22 (Leo III), with pl. xii, nos. 3 (Leo IV). Following these criteria, I believe the present specimen should be attributed to Leo IV based on a) the short length of the vertical lines at the end of the horizontal arms of the cross, and b) the top of the cross which is very close to the border.
[332] See above, 3–4, n 67.

The dominant design for imperial seals also became aniconic with the cross potent as its central design on the obverse, very similar to the design of *miliaresia*, and Nesbitt and Morrisson identified additional iconographic parallels with silver coins,[333] reinforcing proposal that this type of seal may have been introduced together with *miliaresia* in 720, although we cannot be absolutely certain which came first. The mentioned double-bust seal design, with fewer surviving specimens, was presumably used around Constantine's coronation and slightly later, but this does not exclude the possibility of the two designs being in use concurrently. The obverse of the aniconic seals features the cross potent with the Trinitarian formula inscribed on the wreath border and a continuing six-row inscription on the reverse: 'In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (obv.), Leo and Constantine, pious *basileis* of the Romans (rev.)' (figs. 12–13).[334] It seems that the Trinitarian formula became a dominant expression in official documents at the time; we find it preceding the *prooimon* of the *Ekloge* law-code issued in the names of Leo and Constantine in 740.[335] Humphreys suggests that its presence in the *Ekloge* was proclaiming the Isaurians' orthodox credentials,[336] but it should be added that it was also reasserting one of the crucial Christian doctrines heavily contested by the 'enemies of the Cross' at the time, which aligns well with its meticulous defence in the letter of Leo to 'Umar. Moreover, surviving seals testify that a number of high-ranking figures adopted the supplication formula Ἁγία Τριάς, βοήθει ('Holy Trinity, help'), which, Zacos and Veglery propose, should be associated with Iconoclast ideology.[337] Auzépy further argued that 'L'insistance sur l'Esprit et la Trinité chez les iconoclastes serait ainsi le pendant de l'insistance, chez les iconodoules, sur la personne du Christ, dont l'incarnation visible justifie la représentation, et sur la Théotokos, sa mère humaine'.[338] The iconodules certainly tried hard to present the iconoclasts as enemies of the Theotokos, and the origin of this issue may lie in the fact that, although Leo III had initially used the Theotokos (fig. 14),[339] he abandoned her representation as the symbol on imperial seals after 720, which was arguably the most striking innovation, as the image had dominated the obverse of imperials seals since the time of Justinian I or Justin II.[340] The one notable exception to this practice is Emperor Constantine IV, who replaced the Theotokos with the symbol of the cross, although he may have reversed this

[333] DOS6, 61.
[334] DOS6, 61, nos. 31.1–2. See additional commentary at Dumbarton Oaks' online catalogue, https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1955.1.4278.
[335] The formula is inserted after the tile and before the *prooimion*, *Ekloge*, 160.9–10.
[336] Humphreys 2015, 95.
[337] *ZV*, 549. See the examples of the mentioned Arsaber, *patrikios* and *strategos*, ibid., 558–9, nos. 751–3, or Lykastos, hypatos, imperial spatharios and later *strategos* of Kephallenia, ibid., 627–9, nos. 917–9.
[338] Auzépy 2004, 158–9.
[339] DOS6, 58, nos. 28.1–2.
[340] DOS6, 14, no. 6.1.

decision towards the end of his reign.[341] Considering the established emulation of the emperor Constantine IV at the beginning of Leo III's reign, it seems possible that the removal of the Theotokos from seals was in some way connected to or inspired by Constantine IV's act. Considering that just like Leo, Constantine IV came to power not long before an Arab siege, the preference towards the cross may have been somehow connected with that siege. It may be added that, similarly to the Trinitarian formula, the attitude behind the removal of the Theotokos is to an extent reflected in the letter of Leo to 'Umar. Namely, the Mother of God is never the focus of any discussion in the letter; in fact, she is only mentioned twice indirectly, both times in the section dedicated to Christ's divinity.[342] In the first instance, Leo makes a reminder of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 7:14): 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel, which means, God is with us [Isa. 7:14]'.[343] The second reference is in response to the question of how Christ can be considered a divine being when he 'has dwelt in flesh and blood, and in the unclean entrails of a woman?',[344] and it focuses only on denying the Muslim perception of impurity, without even mentioning the Theotokos.[345] The preeminence accorded to the cross over the Theotokos attested in redesigning of imperial seals is a valuable piece of evidence since it is not affected by the many problems of the textual records, and it predates the inception of Iconoclasm (c. 726–30). I believe it is part of the promotion of the cross in the context of the 717/18 siege, that is, its commemoration, and it may be reflecting one of the acts that fuelled the 'intercessory feud' between the emperor and the patriarch (discussed in more detail below).

The capacity of coins and seals to communicate symbolic messages and ideological significance is undeniable. This is true both for internal and external politics; as mentioned, at the end of the seventh century the ideological war of images between the empire and the Caliphate was waged through gold coinage, and it continued under the emperor Leo through silver denominations. Moreover, seals and coins always reflect the 'bigger picture', as numerous examples from different periods of Byzantine history show: as such they are valuable snapshots of the general policy of the period in which they were produced.[346] What are the changes introduced in 720 telling us? Looking at the most basic level, one sees that the focus is on the imperial figures and the symbol of the cross. If we consider the message more broadly, the two themes coming forth prominently from the surviving numismatic and sigillographic material are imperial-dynastic concerns and the cross as the instrument of Christ's victory over Islam, symbolically

[341] See above, n. 126.
[342] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 89, 97.
[343] Ibid., 89.
[344] Ibid., 71.
[345] Ibid., 89, 97.
[346] See the examples in Morrisson 2013, and Marić 2018.

brought together in the ceremonial *miliaresion*, as it was a coin introduced for Constantine's coronation, based on and competing with Arab *dirhem*, featuring representation of the cross potent and 'Jesus Christ Conquers' 'motto', clearly drawing on 718 victory.

The cult of the cross at the time of Leo III

That the emperor Leo III (and his successors) championed the symbol of the cross, which became the only religious symbol adopted by the Iconoclasts, is well-established.[347] Even so, attempts to single out a more specific meaning being promoted among the several usually associated with the cross, or at a more nuanced interpretation behind this policy initiated under Leo III, are rather rare.[348] One problem in discussing the issue, and I presume one of the reasons for fewer studies engaging with the question, is the fact that the cross was a universal Christian symbol; Barber explained well the difficulties that the iconophiles encountered in refuting the devotion to the cross during the second Iconoclasm in the ninth century, saying that they were 'faced with a dilemma wherein they must critique the iconoclasts' devotion to the cross while preserving the legitimacy of this traditional Christian sign'.[349] Indeed, the cross was at once a religious and imperial symbol, and the most common qualities associated with it were its life- and victory-giving power,[350] originating from the story of Emperor Constantine the Great's vision before the victory at the Milvian Bridge.[351] While the cult of the cross, relevant for both of these meanings, began developing already in the fourth century, it is well-established that it was promoted and expanded significantly in the seventh century under Emperor Herakleios.[352] The emperor carried the piece of the True Cross on campaign, and George of Pisidia proclaimed the victory has been won by its power.[353] In 635, Herakleios ordered for the relic to be transported to Constantinople due to the danger of the Arab attack, and, as mentioned, George of Pisidia retroactively praised its role in the siege of 626.[354] The arrival of the relic certainly intensified the worship in the capital.[355] There existed two major feasts, the commemoration of restitution, celebrated on

[347] Moorhead 1985. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 140–43.
[348] An earlier example is Moorhead 1985, see also Barber 2002, 83–105, focusing on theological significance of the cross in iconoclast debates.
[349] Barber 2002, 102.
[350] For the victory, see Grabar 1936, 31–9. See further Moorhead 1985, and Brubaker 1999, 153.
[351] *VC* I, 28–32; tr. Averil Cameron and Hall, 80–2, and commentary, 204–13. Constantine the Great was invoked by George of Pisidia, *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 47–63, and Leo III's contemporary, Andrew of Crete, §7, 478–9. See also Moorhead 1985, 171–3.
[352] Moorhead 1985, 174–5. Drijvers 2002. Barber 2002, 86. De Groote 2007, 445–8. *ODB*, 551–3, s.v. 'Cross, Cult of the'.
[353] George of Pisidia, *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 27–30, 54–6.
[354] Ibid., 73–81.
[355] Drijvers 2002.

the third Sunday of Lent, and the Exaltation of the Cross feast celebrated on 14 September.[356] The latter seems to have become the central one in the capital; Barber stressed that this feast 'gave a widespread liturgical focus to the cross as cult object' and further concluded that '[t]he cross and its cult were, therefore, an available tradition to which the iconoclasts could appeal'.[357] Importantly for the current context, the cross figured prominently in religious polemics, and it was understood as a symbol of the divinity of Christ and salvation, made possible by Christ's death on the cross.[358] In the *Sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross* by Andrew of Crete, contemporary with Leo's reign, all of the mentioned aspects (and more) are invoked and praised.[359]

Along with this broader development of the cult, scholars point out that after the Arab conquest, the cross also acquired anti-Muslim/Islamic symbolism.[360] Although this is an obvious and expected aspect, it deserves a more thorough treatment. Ever since the Arab conquest, crosses were targeted sporadically; however, the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik made it an official and sustained policy of suppressing the symbol of the cross in public.[361] The veneration of the cross by the Christians was also constantly challenged as idolatrous in polemical literature – one among several points taken over from the Jewish polemic – of which we have seen several examples, including the 'Umar–Leo exchange.[362] With the cross being thus targeted by the Muslim authorities physically and through religious polemic ideologically, it is no surprise that the Byzantines employed the expression 'enemies of the Cross' for both the Jews and, in particular, the Muslims.[363] It is noteworthy that in the Muslim apocalyptic tradition ascribed to Abū Qabīl (d. 745), who had supposedly transmitted it from several of Prophet's companions, the Byzantines are portrayed shouting 'the cross has won' in a moment of victory.[364] Importantly, the cross is proclaimed as the instrument of protection of the empire against the Muslims in the immensely popular and influential Pseudo-Methodius' Apocalypse:

[356] De Groote 2007, 448. Andrew of Crete, §8.
[357] Barber 2002, 86.
[358] Ibid., 52–3.
[359] Andrew of Crete, tr. De Groote, §3, 460–5, the cross the symbol of the divinity of Christ and 'pinnacle of salvation'; §4, 466–9, the rod of Moses as prefiguration of the cross; §5, 470–3, religious polemic, and 474–5, protective power of the cross; §7, 478–9, victory-giving power deriving from Constantine the Great; §9, 482, the cross as 'the basis for the salvation of all'.
[360] Crone 1980, 82. Moorhead 1985, 177–8.
[361] Robinson 2005, 51–2, 79–80. See also Crone 1980, 68, with further references to older literature.
[362] See above, nn. 281, 282, 283. Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, 71, 99. For the earlier examples of the seventh-century polemical literature touching on the cross, see Crone 1980, 68–9; De Groote 2007, 445; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 142; Magdalino 2012, 146–7.
[363] A contemporary example is found in the letter of the Patriarch Germanos to Thomas the Metropolitan of Klaudiopoulis, Mansi XIII, 124 E–125 A.
[364] Bashear 1991, 177.

> Denn es gibt kein Volk oder Königreich unter dem Himmel, 'das das Königreich der Christen überwältigen kann, solange es seine Zuflucht nimmt zum lebenspendenden Kreuz, das eingepflanzt wurde in der Mitte der Erde und in seiner Macht festhält Höhe und Tiefe und Länge und Breite. […] 'das er zu Simon sprach; denn welche Macht oder welches Königreich oder welches Volk unter dem Himmel hat eine so riesige und gewaltige Macht, daß es die Macht des heiligen Kreuzes überwältigen kann, zu dem das Königreich der Griechen, das ist das der Römer, seine Zuflucht nimmt?[365]

In the Greek translation, completed already before the siege in 717, a change is made towards the very end of the section, the kingdom of the Greeks is removed, the cross is presented as a 'breastplate', and tied more directly with Christ: '[…] by whose might and holiness the kingdom of the Romans has covered with a breastplate through the one who was hung upon it, our Lord Jesus Christ?'[366] As mentioned, this very same redaction contains an interpolation concerning the siege of Constantinople, and Ps.-Methodius also influenced the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, where we find the cross invoked at the height of the Arab advance on Constantinople: '[h]ow will the orthodox faith of the Christians and the invincible power of the honorable and life-giving cross be overcome?'[367] The most direct expression of the anti-Arab significance of the cross in connection with the siege is found in Łewond; here, the general Maslama is portrayed sending a letter to the emperor, threatening that he will shatter the wood of the cross, which the Byzantines worship, over the emperor Leo's head,[368] which resembles a line from George of Pisidia, who portrays Khosrow II (r. 590–628), despising the wood of the cross.[369]

In what follows, I will argue that the promotion and expansion of the cult of the cross in Constantinople under Emperor Leo III occurred closely related with the siege in 717/18, that is, in the context of the commemoration of the siege, and that the promoted qualities subsumed salvific, protective and victory-giving powers specifically against the attacks of the Arabs. To argue these points, I will analyse further evidence describing a monument erected under Leo in front of the main palace gate (the Chalke), the exhibition of the cross ceremony preserved in a later text (*De Cerimoniis*), the triumphal procession commemorating the siege during Leo's reign based on the close reading of the narrative of the siege preserved in Łewond, which is believed to be the lost *Synaxis* for 15 August.

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[365] Ps.-Methodius, §9, 8–9, pp. 19–20; Germ. tr. Reinink, 33–4. For the commentary on the passage, see Reinink 1993b, 32–4, IX, 8 and IX, 9.
[366] Greek Ps.-Methodius, §9, 8–9, p. 126; Engl. tr. Garstad, 32–3.
[367] Apocalypse of Daniel, tr. Zervos, 764.
[368] Łewond, 96–9; tr. Arzoumanian, 109–10. See also below, 42–3.
[369] George of Pisidia, *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, 67–8.

The cross monument in front of the Chalke Gate

The description of the monument in front of the Chalke gate survives in the much-studied letter of the patriarch Germanos to the metropolitan Thomas of Klaudioupolis.[370] The dating of the letter is still a matter of discussion, but the arguments for dating it before 730 (i.e. Germanos' deposition) seem more convincing than after, as hypothesized by Speck.[371] Discussing the issue of icon-veneration causing the unrest in the church, the patriarch warns Thomas that they should take care so as not to give any grounds to the 'enemies of the Cross' for their accusations of the Christians being in error of idolatry and asks:

> So isn't this why our altogether most pious and Christ-loving emperors have raised a true monument to their own godliness? I mean the picture in front of the Palace, in which, placing the figures of the apostles and prophets and inscribing their statements concerning the Lord, they have proclaimed pride of their conviction in the Saving Cross?[372]

Based on the line 'in front of the palace', scholars propose that the monument was erected in front of the Chalke Gate.[373] This was the ceremonial gate, and an important liminal space between the palace complex and the city.[374] It was in this spot that the emperors traditionally communicated important statements, such as whether the emperor was on campaign, or, as became practice during Iconoclasm, the shifts in religious policy.[375] The gate was also associated with imperial victory; under Emperor Justinian I, it was decorated with images of war and triumph,[376] while Emperor Theophilos concluded his first triumph with an address to the citizens from a podium, accompanied with a processional cross, set in front of the Chalke.[377] Therefore, a monument placed in front of the Chalke was an official statement meant to reach a wide audience, proclaiming salvific power of the cross.

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[370] Mansi XIII, 108A–128A. See Stein 1980. Speck 1981, 267–81. Auzépy 1990, 446–7. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 94–105, with lengthy list of references. Magdalino 2012, 139–43.
[371] The letter has been traditionally dated to shortly before 726, after Ostrogorsky, see Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 94, n. 89, with references to older literature. Stein 1980, 87f., proposed 729. Speck 1981, 267–81, hypothesized that the letter is of a later date, after Germanos had been deposed in 730, which was accepted by Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 98–105, esp. 105, n. 117, but rejected by Auzépy 1990, 446–7, ead. 1999, 290–1, ead. 2008, 279–91, and Magdalino 2012, 139–43.
[372] Mansi XIII, 124 E–125 A, tr. Magdalino 2012, 141, οἱ τὰ πάντα εὐσεβέστατοι καὶ φιλόχριστοι ἡμῶν βασιλεῖς στήλην ἀληθῶς τῆς οἰκείας φιλοθείας, τὴν πρὸ τῶν βασιλείων λέγω εἰκόνα ἐγείραντες, ἐν ᾗ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν ἀναθέμενοι τὰς ἰδέας καὶ τὰς τούτων περὶ τοῦ Κυρίου ἐγγράψαντες φωνάς, τῆς ἑαυτῶν πεποιθήσεως τὸ καύχημα τὸν σωτήριον σταυρὸν ἀνεκήρυξαν. See also Mango 1959, 112.
[373] Auzépy 1990, 446–7. Magdalino, 2012. Herrin 1987, 335, also understands the notice to refer to the Chalke, but adds that it may have been another place 'in front of the palace'. Locating the monument at the Chalke becomes increasingly more likely when we take into account Auzépy's convincing arguments that there was probably no image of Christ at the Chalke at the time, Auzépy 1990.
[374] Mango 1959, remains the standard study. Recent campaign unearthed the remains of the gate, Denker 2013.
[375] Auzépy 2013, 73. Magdalino 2012, 143.
[376] For the description, see Mango 1959, 30–4.
[377] McCormick 1986, 64, 148. See below, n. 1195.

Mango and Magdalino independently made almost identical propositions of what the monument may have looked like.[378] It featured the central image, almost certainly of a cross 'either between symmetrical ranks of apostles and prophets, or above their unbroken rows', with the figures 'holding unfurled scrolls inscribed with texts from their respective books', pointing out to the cross with their free hands. The accompanying texts 'confirmed the emperors' belief in the saving power of the Cross', and an attribution was made, probably through an epigram (the 'inscription').[379] Pointing to the common usage of florilegia in theological debates at the time, Magdalino further describes the image as 'illustrated florilegium of excerpts, no doubt in highly abbreviated form, from books of the Old and New Testaments, proving the divinity of Christ and more particularly the holiness of the Cross on which he had been crucified'.[380] If his reconstruction is correct, may we even imagine the monument as an abbreviated visual sermon on the divinity of Christ and salvific power of the cross?

Commenting on the monument, Herrin adds that the monument may have been erected 'in thanks for the triumph in 718',[381] while more recently Magdalino proposed it was probably not erected for a particular event, and connected it with Leo III's unsuccessful attempt at the baptism of the Jews, arguing that they were the primary audience of the monument.[382] I would agree with Herin's proposition, and I think it can be much expanded by examining the monument's role in the context of the commemoration of the 718 victory and Leo III's promotion of related imperial ideology – although I would stress that this does not exclude that the monument still played a role in the baptism of Jews. If we consider the overall emphasis on the cross, as a symbol of imperial victory over the Arabs and the dominant position accorded to it under Leo III, it is difficult to imagine that the monument proclaiming salvific power of the cross had nothing to do with the role of the cross in the 718 victory. Especially with the emperor performing some sort of supplication ceremony involving the cross. This conclusion, I believe, will become more likely when we look further evidence of the imperial narrative developed for commemorating the siege in 718, especially through public performance involved in two feasts: the exhibition of the cross and the main, triumphal procession commemorating the city's salvation in 718. In the latter, I will argue, the monument played an important role.

[378] Auzépy 1990, 447, n. 8, refers to the proposition imparted by Cyril Mango in a private communication, which agrees with the description made independently by Magdalino 2012, 142–3, referenced hereafter.
[379] Description and quotes at Magdalino 2012, 142–3.
[380] Magdalino, 2012, 143.
[381] Herrin 1987, 335.
[382] Magdalino 2012.

The 'Exhibition of the Cross' ceremony

The exhibition of the cross ceremony is recorded in *De Cerimoniis* as: 'What is necessary to observe on the first of August when the honourable and life-giving cross goes out'.[383] The cross is removed from the *skeuophylakion* (sacristy) of the Great Palace by the *protopapas*, and later by the *papias*, who carries and places it at various points within the palace complex to be venerated. After that, the cross begins its journey around the city:

> The cross begins on July 28 to go around and to sanctify every place and every house of this God-guarded and imperial City, but especially the walls themselves, so that both this City and the whole area around it are filled with grace and holiness. This continues until August 13. On the morning of the 13th of the said month, it goes into the Sacred Palace and is set up on the throne which is in the Chrysotriklinos.[384]

After the customary hymns and prayers of supplication, the *papias*, accompanied by the *protopapas* and palace-stewards, carries the cross around the palace, 'sanctifying the bedchamber and the whole Palace', and eventually leaves it in the Church of the Theotokos of the Pharos in the evening. On the morning of the following day, i.e. August 14, it was again the *papias* and *protopapas* who take care that the cross is returned to the *skeuophylakion*.'[385]

We do not know exactly when this ceremony was introduced; it must have been after 635, when the emperor Herakleios ordered for the relic to be brought from Jerusalem because of the Arab threat. However, Auzépy briefly discussed the ceremony and proposed the period of emperor Leo III's reign;[386] I think she is correct, and I will try to expand on her proposal.

The formula 'God-guarded and imperial city' (τῆς θεοφυλάκτου καὶ βασιλίδος πόλεως) employed in *De Cerimoniis* might offer a clue for the dating, although an inconclusive one. The formula began to be used after the 626 siege;[387] the first record of the longer version, including the epithet 'imperial', is not long after, in one of the emperor Herakleios' novels,[388] and it has been used more prominently during Trullo, under Justinian II.[389] It appears to have been used largely in official documents; the sole example

[383] De Cer. II, 8, 538–41; tr. Moffatt and Tall, 538–41.
[384] De Cer. II.8, 538–40; tr. Moffatt and Tall, 539–40.
[385] De Cer. II.8, 540.
[386] Auzépy 1995b, 362–3.
[387] Cameron Av. 1979, 23.
[388] Zepos and Zepos 1962, Novel no. 25.
[389] *Trullo*, prooimion, 55.22–3; §2, 66.13–4, 67.1–2, 68.8–9; §3, 70.12–3; §36, 114.5–6.

found in Theophanes is a quote from an official decree dated to 715,[390] and the formula is sporadically used thereafter, the longer one slightly less frequent according to a search on *TLG*.[391] One of the examples of the longer formula in the period between 715 and *De Cerimoniis* is found in the *prooimion* of the *Ekloge* issued under Leo III, although the shorter one is later used in the chapter on orphans;[392] the usage in the *prooimion*, arguably, carries more weight.

A better argument for dating the ceremony to the time of Leo III is found in the emphasis on defence and in the date. The emphasis on the cross blessing the walls strongly implies its protective role in the city's defence. Carrying a sacred relic around the walls for protection was a common practice in siege contexts, and, as noted, it is quite likely that this procession took place during the siege in 717/18.[393] Such message would also be congruent with the promotion of the salvific power of the cross through the Chalke monument.

We have further evidence of a particularly close relationship between the cross and the walls under Leo III and his son Constantine. The narrative of the siege preserved in Łewond presents, as I will explore in more detail, the Arab general Maslama making three threats in his letter-exchange with Leo prior to the siege: he threatens to destroy 'the foundations of your fortified city in which you trust'; to turn Hagia Sophia into a bath-house for his troops, and to shatter the wood of the Cross over Leo's head.[394] We can see that the fortifications and the cross are put alongside Hagia Sophia as the most important tokens of the city in the face of the siege.[395] In this regard, it is worth reiterating that the apotropaic formula of the cross with the 'IC XC NI KA' between its arms is found on one of the towers repaired under Leo.[396] Furthermore, number of Leo's *miliaresia* with the cross design are pierced (fig. 15), suggesting they could have been worn for protection;[397] although we cannot know whether this took place already during Leo's time, statistically his reign is more likely moment for it to occur simply because it was in this period that the largest number of his coins were in circulation. In short, the ceremony as it is described would agree well with the elevated veneration of the cross and significance ascribed to the walls under Leo III.

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[390] A decree about the transfer of Germanos from his position as metropolitan of Kyzikos to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople, Theophanes, 384–5; tr. Mango and Scott, 535–6, n.1.
[391] For the period between the earliest use and *De Cerimoniis*, the search yielded 31 results for the longer version (including several entries copied from Theophanes), and 71 for the short formula.
[392] Ekloge, *prooimion*, 39–40; §7.1, 457–8.
[393] See above, 20–2.
[394] Łewond 96–9; tr, Arzoumanian, 110.
[395] See above, n. 99.
[396] Walter 1997. For the cross on the tower, see Van Millingen 1899, 98–9, and most recently, the treatment of the brick inscriptions on the towers renovated in 740–3, Loaëc 2018.
[397] DOC3.1, 252–3, pl. ii–iii, nos. 22a.5, 22b.3, 22c.3.

The cross, according to De Cer., would come back to the palace on 13 August for the final veneration, before being returned to the sacristy on the next day. As Byzantine tradition unanimously maintains, the Arab army retreated on the 15 August 718, and it is reasonable to assume that the commemorative ceremony was set on the same date.[398] This means that there was a gap of only one day at most between the conclusion of the exhibition ceremony and the triumphal commemorative procession. Although this is not a definite proof, there is no doubt that the timing would fit perfectly.

Besides these aspects, it can also be said that the ceremony would agree with the overall policy under the emperors Leo and his son Constantine. Auzépy pointed out that the ceremony of the cross blessing the houses for protection demonstrated care for the city and its population, which was characteristic of both Leo and Constantine's reigns.[399] Furthermore, the last act of the whole ceremony was literally elevating the cross onto the imperial throne, thus establishing a particularly strong connection between the emperor and the cross, heralding it as the primary symbol of the *basileia*.[400] This would again, fit with Leo's elevation of the cross that is so well attested.

If the dating is accepted, it means that a relic would travel around the city for two weeks, blessing the houses and the walls, reminding the citizens that it was the power of the cross that protected the walls and preparing them for the triumphal commemoration that was to follow, in which the emperor himself would carry the cross on his shoulders. According to Łewond, a multitude of citizens joined the procession[401] – carrying crosses according to another tradition[402] – and we may reasonably assume it was indeed so during the commemoration. With this in mind, the exhibition of the cross ceremony could have been also an invitation to the citizens to join the procession, attempting to build a communal identity around the symbol of the cross and the figure of the emperor – the two 'aspects' singled out on coins and seals, presumably reflecting more general picture. In other words, the ceremony would be an important part of developing the cult of the cross and the emperor in the capital.

Triumphal commemorative procession (15 August)

As introduced, the narrative on the siege in Łewond preserves a testimony of a commemorative procession, presumed to be in part the lost *Synaxis* for 15 August, in other words, it depicts a feast commemorating the salvation in 718 under Leo III. I first

[398] The *Synaxis* for this commemoration is presumably behind the narrative preserved in Łewond, see the following heading.
[399] Auzépy 1995, 363.
[400] Since it is also religious symbol, the universal symbol of Christianity, we may see it also as a statement of harmony between the sacred and temporal, if these boundaries were perceived at all.
[401] Łewond, 102–3.
[402] *Anonymous Story-Teller*, tr. Thomson, 195.

look at the procession, before moving to the close reading of the text. It is said that after the emperor had seen the multitude of ships approaching the capital, he immediately

> ordered the patriarch to summon the senate and all the city's inhabitants and take with them in unshaken and ardent faith the invincible and resplendent vexilium of Christ's cross as their ally. Amidst the entire multitude, the king himself carried the triumphant and invincible victory, that is the standard of the cross, on his shoulders, while the people glorified the heavens with sweet fragrance of incense and by lighting candles and torches in front of and behind the victorious and honourable cross.[403] The gate of the city was then opened, and the entire multitude went out, as [the emperor] exalted the standard of the cross upon waters, saying: 'Help us Christ, Son of God, Saviour of the universe!' He then tripled his praise, addressing it to the heavens, and then struck the waters of the sea with the vexilium of the cross until the cruciform lines on them became sealed. It was the power of the holy cross that immediately shook the depths of the sea, and consequently the high waves swarmed up vehemently, causing a terrible shipwreck among the Arab troops, most of which drowned in the sea and became subject to the same punishment and wrath as were the Pharaoh's troops [Exodus 14:26–9].[404]

Based on this text, Benjamin Anderson recently proposed a reconstruction of the commemorative procession's route.[405] He first argued that the so-called Anemodoulion,[406] has been repaired during the reign of the emperor Leo III, and suggested it would have been a fitting starting point for the triumphal route of the commemoration. He pointed out that the decoration of the monument, featuring a weathervane and reliefs of the winds, would have been appropriate considering it was a storm that blew the Arab fleet away, and added that the so-called 'Invincible' cross,[407] believed at the time to have been erected by the emperor Constantine the Great, would have stood in the proximity of the Anemodoulion, which would present a convenient stage for the start of a triumphal procession in which the emperor carried a victory-giving cross on his shoulders. Anderson makes further argument that the procession would have terminated at the harbor of Julian/Sophia, passing through the Kontoskalion Gate, which was probably renovated in this period as well. He concludes that the section between Anemodoulion and the Kontoskalion gate would have been promoted as the new triumphal route, accorded 'appropriate monumentality'.[408]

Anderson makes a sensible case for the repair of the Anemodoulion, and the Kontoskalion gate as the ending point, also agreeing with what we know about the position of the Arab fleet. However, as for the starting point, I believe a different spot is more likely.

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[403] According to the *Anonymous Story-Teller*, tr. Thomson, 195, the citizens carried small crosses.
[404] Łewond, 102–3, tr. Arzoumanian, 112.
[405] Anderson 2011b.
[406] Located between the Artopoleion and Forum of the Bull, *ODB*, I, 96, s.v. 'Anemodoulion.'
[407] One of the three large crosses in the city, supposedly erected by the emperor Constantine the Great.
[408] Anderson 2011b, 50–2.

As far as we know about the imperial ceremonies and processions from later sources, especially *De Cerimoniis*, imperial movement for any such event was highly regulated from the moment the emperor left the palace, or even his bedroom; that is, as soon as he appeared in a semi- or fully public space.[409] If we imagine the movement to the monument, the emperor, and the multitude of citizens, would have to come down the main thoroughfare, the *Mese*, and pass several high points in the city, like the Forum of Constantine. As we hear from other sources, any imperial movement through the city was very likely to draw a crowd, especially coming down the busiest street of the city.[410] Moreover, the procession featured not only the holy person of the emperor, but also one of the holiest relics, which makes it even more difficult to imagine that its movement has not been highly regulated even before it has been removed from the *skeuophylakion* of the palace (the church of St Stephen). Even if we imagine a scenario in which such movement was unregulated, which I highly doubt, it would have probably taken a form of a public procession on its own.

I would therefore propose that, as with many other ceremonies, it took its beginning from the moment the emperor and the holy relic left their initial position. It would have probably comprised of a comparably shorter section within the palace complex, beginning from the more secluded and proceeding to increasingly public spaces, with the audience/participants matching the level of publicity.[411] The account preserved in Łewond is nothing like the entries in *De Cerimoniis* of course, but we do have a semblance of classification in that the emperor orders the patriarch, the senate, and the citizens to join.[412] These are in fact, what may be considered the city's 'constitutional' elements, in rhetoric at least. However, considering the importance of the event and its commemoration at the time, for the ruler who certainly did much to promote it, and for the citizens at large, I believe that the description from Łewond suggesting a multitude of people participating seems likely. With that in mind, the spot that could signify the 'beginning' of the procession for everyone involved would be the first *truly* public spot en route from the palace, that is the Chalke gate; the point clearly marking a liminal space between the imperial core and the wider city;[413] the spot, moreover, where a monument proclaiming the salvific power of the cross had recently been erected in the names of emperors Leo

[409] See for example the imperial visit to Hagia Sophia, De Cer., I, ch. 1, 5–35.
[410] Logothete A, ch. 131.352–4, records that as the emperor Michael III and Basil were returning to the city from a campaign, the crowd 'gathered to see the emperor'.
[411] Consisting probably of high-ranking courtiers, acclamations of the demes' representatives, members of the *Scholae* etc. See De Cer., I, chs. 1–9. For the ceremonies with specific references to the Chalke, see Mango 1959, 73–81.
[412] This tripartite division is already introduced in the narrative earlier; Łewond, 98–9, tr, Arzoumanian, 110, after the emperor reads the threatening letter from the general Maslama, he 'gave orders to the Patriarch, the senate, and the entire population of the city, to say prayers of exaltation at St Sophia'.
[413] Mango 1959, 17–19, 73–81. Malmberg 2016.

and Constantine. The procession probably made stops on its way, perhaps at the Anemodoulion to honour the monument and its patron, the emperor Leo, as well as the 'invincible cross' of Constantine the Great, as Anderson proposes, and then continued further down towards the Kontoskalion gate. To conclude, it seems likely that the procession must have begun earlier than from the Anemodoulion; the cross monument in front of the Chalke gate would have been an appropriate spot of the triumphal route to 'publically begin', and it would accord the triumphal route with equally 'appropriate monumentality', to join Anderson's final observation.

The lost iconoclast *Synaxis:* Leo III as new Hezekiah and new Moses, custodian of Christ's throne and savior of the city

Following Gero's study and further evidence presented throughout this chapter, I consider this narrative as an evidence of a text produced by the Byzantines for the Byzantine audience during Leo's reign promoting this emperor and his role in the salvation of the city. Before embarking on the campaign, general Maslama is introduced making a vow to his brother, the Caliph Sulaymān, that he will make the empire disappear by 'destroying the city of Constantinople'.[414] A letter-exchange between Maslama and Leo follows.[415] In his letter, Maslama professes the primacy of Islam, demonstrated through the military victories over many nations of which he boasts;[416] he demands submission and tribute, and makes the mentioned three threats, that he will destroy Constantinople's walls, turn Hagia Sophia into a bathhouse for his soldiers, and shatter the wood of the cross over Leo's head.[417] Immediately after receiving the letter, Leo III orders the patriarch, the senate, and the whole city to pray incessantly for three days in Hagia Sophia. Next, the emperor himself arrived and spread the insulting letter on the altar of Hagia Sophia 'in the manner of Hezekiah'; in tears, the emperor beseeches God for salvation, remaining in prayers and fasting for three days (2 Kings 19).[418] He then responds to Maslama's insults – 'the Lord […] will shut your blasphemous mouth that you opened against the King of the kings, his city, the temple dedicated to the glory of his name, and against me, the custodian of Christ's throne'[419] – and claims of the supremacy of Islam.[420] In the concluding section of his letter, the emperor warns the Arab general not to

[414] Łewond, 96–7; tr. Arzoumanian, 109. On Muslim apocalyptic prophecies predicting the conquest of Constantinople, see above, n. 205.
[415] Łewond, 96–101; tr. Arzoumanian, 109–11. For the plentiful but problematic evidence of negotiations between the two, see Brooks 1899, 26–8, 31; Gero 1973, 32–4; Rochow 2001, 307–9; Łewond, 100, n. 509.
[416] Łewond, 96–9; tr. Arzoumanian, 109–10. This motif, and the whole section leading to the siege is taken, sometimes literally, from Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18–19 = Isaiah 36–7).
[417] Łewond, 96–9; tr. Arzoumanian, 109–10.
[418] Łewond, 98–9; tr. Arzoumanian, 110.
[419] Łewond, 98–101; tr. Arzoumanian, 111.
[420] Łewond, 100–1; tr. Arzoumanian, 111.

anger God, reminding him of the fate suffered by the Pharaoh and his army. Maslama initiates the attack, and the emperor promptly responds by leading the supplication procession carrying the cross on his shoulders, that culminates with the destruction of the Arab fleet (Exodus 14:26–9).[421]

One immediately notices that the whole section leading to the Red Sea scene is based on Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18–19 = Isaiah 36–7).[422] This is not surprising, as it was a widely known 'world event,' and an often evoked motif in the context of a siege, not only in Byzantium.[423] A comparable Byzantine example is found in Theophanes, who names the Bulgarian Khan Krum the 'New Sennacherib' when he was about to besiege Constantinople in the early ninth century.[424] The King Hezekiah was among the most celebrated Jewish rulers in the Old Testament, who managed to obtain divine help for the defence of the holy city of Jerusalem, thus a highly suitable model for Emperor Leo to emulate in the context of this siege of Constantinople. Moreover, Hezekiah was the ruler who purged idolatry (2 Kings 18:3-4), which would have been even more fitting model after the emperor Leo embraced Iconoclasm.[425] Comparison of Maslama's siege of Constantinople with Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, and Emperor Leo with King Hezekiah, also implies the recognition of Constantinople as the New Jerusalem and identification of the Byzantines with the 'chosen people' representing the New Israel,[426] ideology pronounced under Justinian II.[427]

The focus of the narrative, and the culmination of the whole section, is the re-enactment of the Exodus scene that caused the destruction of the Arab navy. The essential component of that scene is the cross, and the narrative develops around it, establishing its various aspects. It was initiated with Maslama's threat 'je te briserai, te fracasserai sur la tête le bois de la croix devant quoi tut e prosternes',[428] implying a challenge to the veneration of the cross ubiquitous in polemical literature. Coming after the fortifications and Hagia Sophia,[429] this is the third and final, thus a climax of Maslama's blasphemous threats, putting the emphasis on the cross, and only the one relating to the cross directly

[421] Łewond, 102–3; tr. Arzoumanian, 111–12.
[422] The boasting of the general Maslama in the beginning parallels the negotiations of Sennacherib's envoy Rabshakeh with representatives of the King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:19–35); after receiving the letter, the text even makes a direct reference, saying that the emperor acted 'in the manner of Hezekiah' (2 Kings 19:1–2); emperor's response also has parallels with that of the Jewish King (2 Kings 19:4).
[423] See Richardson 2014, and Verheyden 2014.
[424] Theophanes, 503. Patriarch Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 512 A, also includes Sennacherib in his sarcastic list of 'great rulers,' but actually villains, while denouncing Emperor Constantine V. Verheyden 2014, points out to the variety of ways the Christian authors 'employed' the figure of Sennacherib.
[425] On Hezekiah as a model for Leo III, see Dagron 2003, 164–6, 184.
[426] Magdalino and Nelson 2010.
[427] See above, 4–5.
[428] Łewond, 98–9; Fr. tr. Martin-Hisard.
[429] See above, n. 99.

connects with Leo, establishing almost a personal relationship with the emperor. Moreover, Leo's response is the most elaborate when it comes to the cross. He reminds Maslama of the power of the cross:

> [a]s for you, you are tempting our Lord God, who is able to make you and your multitude sink into the depths of the sea […] like he did to the merciless Pharaoh; it was the rod of Moses, by means of which the waters turned upon the Egyptian troops… that same rod was indeed the antitype of the omnipotent vexillium of the cross of Christ which is being insulted by you this day.[430]

The figure of the emperor in the narrative thus reinforces the power of the cross in response to Maslama's threat; i.e. in response to an 'enemy of the cross' here rendered literally, also reinforcing the image of Leo as a defender of Christianity against the Muslim threat, which builds on and develops further the anti-Islamic aspect of the symbol of the cross. This section also sets up, quite overtly, the narrative's grand scene; it establishes the relation between the rod of Moses and the standard of the cross – the rod of Moses as prefiguration of the cross is a common motif– therefore between Moses and Emperor Leo.[431] The narrative continues to stress the power of the cross in the Red Sea scene; after the emperor as the 'new Moses' makes the prayer for salvation – 'Help us Christ, Son of God, Saviour of the universe!'– and strikes the waters with the standard of the cross, the narrative emphasizes that '[i]t was the power of the holy cross that immediately shook the depths of the sea'.[432]

We can see that considerable space and attention is devoted to the cross, established as the primary instrument of salvation. While the cross is the instrument, Emperor Leo is the agent. That he plays the role of Moses in the re-enactment of the Red Sea scene is made patently obvious, but Leo is never actually called a 'new Moses' – at least not in this text – as George of Pisidia did with Herakleios, nor compared to Moses in any elaborate way, as Eusebios did much earlier with Constantine the Great.[433] Yet, by publicly *performing* the role of a new Moses, it seems that Leo took the mimesis more seriously than his predecessors. Furthermore, with Leo carrying the cross on his shoulders in the procession, the association with Christ would have been hard to miss,

[430] Łewond, 100–1; tr. Arzoumanian, 111.
[431] Rod of Moses as a prefiguration of the cross was also invoked in the contemporary sermon by Andrew of Crete, §4, 464–70.
[432] Łewond, 102–3, tr. Arzoumanian, 112.
[433] For Herakleios, see George of Pisidia, *Carmi*, 2.I, 132–8, and 2. III, 415–25. For Constantine the Great, see examples in *VC*, I.1–9, 12, 20, especially I, 38, 2, depicting the destruction of Maxentius' army in which Constantine plays no direct role. See also the introduction and commentary by Cameron and Hall 1999, 7, 28, 34–9, 186, 215. Further on Moses as an imperial model in Byzantium, see Rapp 1998, ead. 2010, and Dagron 2003, *passim*, esp. 84–98, concerning the rod of Moses relic in the context of imperial processions.

and was probably deliberate.[434] Such association would be pertinent in this context, because the salvation itself and the salvific power of the cross are tied to Christ's death on the cross.[435] Moreover, it would have brought *the* model of a saviour along with the motif of salvation – which seems to be the key term of the early eighth century – according a messianic character to Emperor Leo. This seems to be the underlying message then; Emperor Leo, as a new Moses and new Hezekiah, custodian of Christ's throne, led his chosen people to salvation with the help of divine aid, channelled through the power of the holy cross as the primary instrument of salvation. Such ideological construct would also agree with the inception of Iconoclasm as it is understood in scholarship; rooting out idolatry was to prevent incurring divine wrath and securing salvation. Likewise, the opening paragraph of the *prooimion* of the *Ekloge* stresses that God gave the Law to man 'and through it made known to him everything that should be done and what should be refrained from, so that he might chose the one as it brings Salvation and spurn the other as the cause of chastisement'.[436] This ideology will be expressed more fully under Leo's son Constantine V.[437] We have evidence that the patriarch Germanos, and presumably not only him, was not approving of such imperial self-aggrandizement and that an 'intercessory feud' between the patriarch and the emperor developed in the decade following the Arab siege of Constantinople.

The Cross and the Theotokos as competing mediators of salvation

The first clue about the feud is found in Germanos' letter describing the monument of the cross in front of the Chalke gate. Auzépy already noted 'l'agacement' of the patriarch visible in the lines τῆς ἑαυτῶν πεποιθήσεως τὸ καύχημα.[438] The key term is καύχημα, which is often employed in negative meaning, e.g. Ps. 73(74): 3–4, 'your foes have roared [ἐνεκαυχήσαντο] within your holy place; they set up their emblems there'. We find further hints in the (aforementioned) letter of Pope Gregory II to Patriarch Germanos dated to the mid-720s,[439] that represents a response to a now lost letter in which the patriarch informed the pope about the victory in 718. The pope praises Germanos for the victory, but makes no mention of the emperor. Such a mention could theoretically have

[434] For example, we know that Emperor Herakleios' entry into Jerusalem was designed to emulate Christ, Drijvers 2002.
[435] See the contemporary sermon by Andrew of Crete, §1, 452–5, and especially §3, 461.162–465.237, tr. De Groote, in which he elaborates on this relation proclaiming the cross as 'the pinnacle of our salvation' and 'coming into being for the sake of our redemption' (ibid., 465.213–25).
[436] *Ekloge*, *prooimion*, 11–17; tr. Humphreys 2015, 96, and Ibid., 96–105, on the motif of salvation in the *Ekloge*.
[437] Explored in the next chapter.
[438] Auzépy 1990, 146–7. See the quote in full above, n. 372.
[439] See above, n. 152.

existed and been excised when the letter was interpolated, as described above. However, since the pope's surviving response seems to correspond point for point to the patriarch's letter, it seems probable that the emperor had been omitted from this 'report' altogether and that the patriarch placed himself at the forefront. The final clue of an 'intercessory feud' between emperor and patriarch in the years after the siege is found in the thanksgiving homily to the Virgin, commemorating salvation in 718, attributed to Patriarch Germanos.[440] He adopts the Red Sea scene as the dominant motif throughout the sermon and makes comparisons with the siege in 626.[441] He first contrasts and replaces Moses and the rod with Christ and his mother:

> While in former times, the admirable Moses […] used to perform wonders with the help of dry wood […] for us, on the other hand, Christ, the author and legislator of all creation, instead of the rod used his own mother as instrument of his love of men to help bring forth our salvation.[442]

Later, Germanos carries further the identification of the Theotokos with the rod in an explicit connection with the Avar siege, thus reinforcing the protective power of the Theotokos with a well-known example of the manifestation of that power:

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[440] Germanos, Homily on Salvation. Grumel 1958, 183–90. Herrin 1987, 315, 320–1, 335. Speck 1986, argued against the authenticity of the text, proposing it was a mid-to late ninth century student exercise. Angold 2010, 15, n. 61, considered Speck's argument 'unconvincing', and Anderson 2011b, 50, n. 39, takes the sermon to be authentic without mentioning Speck. There is not enough space to fully engage with Speck's argument, which is fraught with inconsistencies, contains chains of hypotheseis and is often very confusing, but it must be commented on. Speck advances a content- and style-based arguments against the present attribution and dating. The content based argument rests on two main points. First, he argues that the sermon is dependent on the *synaxis* for 626; yet the comparison of the texts offer only a few bits that suggest the *synaxis* for 626 may have been used as a model, but even Speck admits (p. 218), this is far from certain. The model could have easily come from other works dedicated to the salvation in 626. Second, Speck argues that the *synaxis* for 626 was not available in 718, which is completely hypothetical, and highly unlikely in my opinion, certainly less likely than the possibility that the *synaxis* was indeed available. Moreover, Speck often relies on our imperfect knowledge of the siege and expects the author should have presented an accurate historical account in accordance with it (p. 213, 218, 220, 223), thus completely neglecting the genre and the warning of the editor, Grumel 1958, 187–89, that historicity was not of primary concern to the author. In my opinion, Speck's content-based argument is untenable. Speck's stylistic argument is accorded far less space and includes some confusing choices, like comparison with lines concerning the siege from Theophanes, which Speck takes to represent an eighth-century layer (p. 211), but which clearly represents a later addition, probably by Theophanes himself, as Gero 1973, 44–5, has observed. Overall, the argument rests largely on scholarly consensus in c. 1985 about the levels of education and style during the Iconoclast 'dark ages', and Speck argues (p. 225) that the homily does not warrant questioning the consensus since, following his analysis of the content, there is no reason to date the sermon to the early eighth century in any case. In dismissing the authorship, Speck does not seem to consider the background of the patriarch Germanos, who, we know, was from a prominent family, probably distantly related to the emperor Justinian I – cf. Angold 2010, 13, n. 41, and PmbZ #2298 – and would have had access to the best available education at the time – the time *before* the infamous 'disruptions' in education during the period of anarchy in the early eighth century. Finally, as I hope I will demonstrate, the sermon engages with the imperial promotion as reconstructed in this chapter, which would be additional argument in favor of the attribution to Patriarch Germanos and dating it to the early post-718 period, which was a natural moment for the composition of this text to occur, and remains the easiest and best explanation.

[441] Germanos, Homily on Salvation, §§ 12–21, explicit connection with 626 at §16.

[442] Ibid., §§12–13, 194, Μωϋςῆς μὲν οὖν τὸ πρὶν ὁ θαυμάστιος, […] ξύλου ξηροῦ ὑπουργίᾳ ἐτερατούργει θαυμάσια [§13] Ἡμῖν δὲ Χριστὸς ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ νομοθέτης πάσης κτίσεως, ἀντὶ ῥάβδου, τῇ οἰκείᾳ κεχρημένος μητρὶ ὄργανον τῆς ἑαυτόῦ φιλανθρωπίας πρὸς ὑπουργίαν τῆς ἐφ' ἡμῖν σωτηρίας ταύτην προβάλλεται. Speck 1986, 214, also noticed that this motif is very unusual, but did not analyse it further.

> And as far as we are concerned, this now was not the first time that the miraculous and salvific power of this mystical God-bearing rod has manifested itself, but also in the past when the great army of the Avars surrounded this city guarded by God.[443]

Several aspects of the homily are noteworthy. First, Germanos refers back to the Avar siege of Constantinople but makes no mention of the first Arab siege, which would have been arguably a more appropriate comparison being a more recent event involving the identical enemy. Second, and most strikingly, he employs the extremely unusual motif of the Theotokos as the rod.[444] Finally, in the whole homily there is not a single mention of the cross or the emperor. If we compare the homily with the *Synaxis* analysed above, as both were prepared in the same context for the commemoration of the 718, we can see the same basic structure. Germanos also embeds the present case within the Old Testament scene of the destruction of Pharaoh's army and establishes – and thus justifies – the agent and the instrument from this model, Moses and his rod, as prefiguration of the present ones, Christ and his mother. The fact that the rod of Moses as prefiguration of the cross was a very common motif,[445] and that the same parallel being used to posit the Theotokos as the rod is extremely odd, indicates that Germanos probably invented this construction to better fit with the Red Sea scene, because the latter was clearly the most popular motif in the context of the siege.[446] Moreover, considering that the re-enactment of this Old Testament scene was the climax of the triumphal commemorative procession placing the emperor in the centre, I would argue that the proclamation of the Theotokos as the 'instrument' of salvation in the homily was in tacit competition with the imperial discourse. The exclusive focus on the Theotokos is of course not surprising in a thanksgiving homily dedicated to her, but the broader evidence supports the interpretation of a competition going on.

To summarize the evidence: On the one hand, the figure of the Theotokos was removed from imperial seals in 720; the monument erected in the names of Leo and Constantine in front of the palace as an official imperial statement, promoted the divinity of Christ and salvific power of the cross, with the Theotokos apparently playing no role; likewise, she is completely absent from the *Synaxis*, and the triumphal procession centres around the cross as the instrument of salvation, carried by the emperor himself;

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[443] Ibid., §16, 195, Καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῶν δὲ οὐχὶ πρώτως τανῦν ἡ θαυματουργὸς καὶ σωτήριος τῆς μυστικῆς ταυτησὶ καὶ θεοδόχου βακτηρίας διεφάνη ἐνέργεια, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλαι ἀβάρων στρατεύματος συχνοῦ τὴν θεοφύλακτον ταύτην πόλιν περιλαβόντος.
[444] Speck 1986, 214, observed that this motif is exceptional, and thought it was perhaps made up, but did not analyse it further.
[445] For contemporary examples, see Andrew of Crete, tr. De Groote, §4, 466–9; and *Disputation of Sergios the Stylite with a Jew*, tr. Hyaman 1968, V §§3–5, XII §3.
[446] Besides the *Synaxis*, see also Theodosios Grammatikos, 130.14–15.

Leo's polemical letter to 'Umar touches on the Theotokos only marginally; finally, although a different context, the Theotokos is not mentioned in the *Ekloge* as well. The figure of the patriarch is similarly absent from the mentioned documents, or accorded only a minor role as following imperial orders (in the *Synaxis*). On the other hand, the patriarch subtly reveals a disapproval with the message promoted with the monument in front of the palace; in his sermon dedicated to salvation, he does not mention the emperor, nor the cross; finally, as the letter of Pope Gregory seems to suggest, the patriarch also avoided reporting on the imperial role in 718. While the outlined uncertainties remain with some of the sources, the combined evidence corroborates the interpretation of a rivalry. Moreover, the evidence suggests that this feud is characterized by a tacit struggle, which is quite understandable if we consider the symbols and figures involved. Denying the importance of the symbol of the cross or the figure of the Virgin would have been impossible;[447] likewise, openly challenging a claim, or perhaps an interpretation, advanced by the emperor or the patriarch without a strong reason and support would have been highly problematic for either of the two, to say the least. Silence, thus, seems to have been the only available strategy.

Following this interpretation, it remains to offer some answers as to why this rivalry may have developed, and with it to the related question of why the emperor Leo and his circle had embraced the symbol of the cross as much as this chapter has argued, that is, why they may have felt that they were better served by the symbol of the cross than the time-honoured figure of the Theotokos.

The answer to both questions overlaps in the Constantinopolitan context and pertains to the respective developments of the cults of the cross and the Theotokos, specifically the demonstrated divine protection they offered the city, on the one hand, and the effects of the Arab conquest on the other. The cult of the Theotokos expanded with the arrival of her relics, and while she had been considered as the supernatural protectress of the city already in the sixth century, it is believed that this capacity was cemented through her manifested effectiveness during the siege in 626.[448] As outlined, the cult of the cross similarly expanded after the arrival of the relic in 635, but it is noteworthy that George of Pisidia immediately ascribed it a role in defeating the enemies in the siege of 626.[449] However, the big issue is the poor state of the sources concerning the first Arab siege in 667–9, which is a potentially very important missing link. Although the dearth of evidence does not allow advancing satisfactory conclusions, given the evidence that

[447] See above, n. 349.
[448] See above, n. 200.
[449] See above, n. 201.

Constantine IV similarly preferred the cross over the Theotokos, and the discussed public association with Constantine IV under Leo III already during the siege in 717/18, I think we can speculate that the relic of the True Cross was used as a supernatural protection during the first Arab siege as well, perhaps in the spring of 668 to which Jankowiak dates one probable assault on the city.[450] Moreover, since Constantine IV was present in the capital, it is likely that he was the one leading the supplication procession. An indirect evidence in favor of this conjecture is the mentioned testimony from the homily of Patriarch Germanos, who emphatically connects back to the siege of 626 as a well-known event in which the Theotokos saved the city, but says nothing about the first Arab siege, which, from the perspective of 717/18, would have been both the more recent siege and the one performed by the same enemy. If so, the events of 668 would have seen the first use of the cross as a means of protection during a siege of Constantinople, and it would have been a very specific case demonstrating the miracle-working power of the cross against the Arabs. While the Theotokos' cult may have been stronger in the city overall and come with a longer tradition as the supernatural protectress, the potency that the symbol of the cross had acquired in the previous period – especially as an instrument of supernatural protection of the empire against the Arabs, as established in the popular apocalyptic tradition spreading around this time in the capital – was more pertinent to the existential threat that ensued with the Arab conquest and the rise of Islam, that did not exist in 626.

The underlying issue behind the competition, I believe, is also tied to the effects of the deep existential crisis preceding Leo III's reign which made the Roman subjects question not only imperial, but also ecclesiastical authorities. The successful defence of Constantinople was a major demonstration of divine protection of the city, and persuading the population that this was also the proof that the authorities were doing their job correctly was an important aspect. Attachment to and promotion of the 'proven' instruments of salvation thus served the purpose of re-establishing the shaken authority and, importantly, to advance a claim of whose job it was pre-eminently to worry about the salvation of the community. The claim was mediated through the commemorative acts of the salvation in 718, that offered proof of the salvific power of the two respective instruments, as Germanos explicitly states when connecting the present case with 626. The agents behind these instruments are shown to intercede with the divine on behalf of the community; here the emperor is one step ahead, as it were, because he addresses Christ directly before activating the power of the cross – 'Help us Christ, Son of God,

[450] Jankowiak 2013, 304.

Saviour of the universe!' – while the patriarch addresses his supplications to the Theotokos – who then intercedes with her son – by using her relics or images. The diverse media and modes through which the salvific power of the cross and the figure of the emperor were celebrated all contributed to the outlined concerns to varying degrees. However, arguably the most important in the Constantinopolitan context were the two newly proposed ceremonies traversing the city. Scholars agree that the Marian feasts were the key component in the spread of her cult and establishing her role as the supernatural protectress.[451] McCormick concluded that the most remarkable aspect of the deliverances of the capital was that 'for the first time on record, the patriarch of Constantinople anchored these events in the collective consciousness of generations to come and in the local cults of the Virgin, thanks to processions staged every year to commemorate the city's liberations'.[452] Earlier, Averil Cameron explored how in the sixth century Marian feasts formed part of the 'movement towards the reintegration of society,' and she concludes that it was:

> an attempt by the governing class to impose control through ritualization and the validation of all this by the general acceptance of a symbol perfectly suited – through the idea of mediation – to belief in a total union of body and spirit, the ultimate possible guarantee of safety and protection.[453]

I think Cameron's assessment is applicable to the process taking place under Leo III, only this time focused on the symbol of the cross and the figure of the emperor, who guaranteed 'safety and protection' to the citizens, as proven during the siege in 717/18.

Further reasons behind the pre-eminence accorded to the cross by Leo and his circle should be seen in accordance with the advantages of this symbol for broader policies. The primary goal under Leo's reign was resisting the Arab assault;[454] Byzantine strategy of dealing with the Arabs had been adapted to a much more defensive stance, and Byzantine diplomacy attempted to reach other polities to counter the Arab threat – it is telling that Leo decided to marry his heir Constantine to a Khazar princess instead of choosing a bride from among the Byzantine noble families.[455] Furthermore, a similar ideology in a militant tone is espoused in the *Ekloge*, with the law and its correct application being conceived as 'weapons' ensuring divine support to resist the enemies: 'with these weapons, by His power, we wish to firmly resist our enemies (ἀντιτάσσεσθαι τοῖς πολεμίοις βουλόμεθα)'.

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[451] Cameron Averil 1978, ead. 2000. McCormick 1986, 74–5. Mango 2000. 2006, 37–59.
[452] McCromick 1986, 75.
[453] Cameron Averil 1978, 107–8.
[454] See the Introduction, **Outline of the thesis**.
[455] Nikephoros, §63. Theophanes, 409–10.

The cross was overall a more universal symbol, more easily communicable to Christian allies, and potentially less offensive to non-Christian ones, as Magdalino argued.[456] As mentioned, Leo invited the Georgian princes Mir and Arčil to be patient and resist the Arabs: 'together with us, for the sake of the service of the Cross'.[457] Besides Christian (and non-Christian) polities, the cross would have been an easier symbol to rally the support of the diverse multitude of Christians still living under the caliph's rule, as it was free from Marian and Christological controversies of late antiquity and the existing iconophobia. That there existed specific concern for the provinces is visible in the *prooimion* of the *Ekloge*, where it is stressed that it is presently not easy to navigate the law 'particularly to those who live outside our God-guarded imperial city'.[458] In this regard, the outlined background of Emperor Leo and his closest advisers is crucial, suggesting that during his reign, a stronger influence from the eastern fringes was brought to Constantinople. If this interpretation is correct, the feud, which can also be described as a competition of symbols, may in part be related to the opposition against the newcomer(s) in the capital.

Conclusion: Leo III's legacy

Leo III became emperor on the eve of the second Arab siege of Constantinople, one of the greatest threats to the capital in its history until that point. Initially, his legitimacy was built on association with Emperor Constantine IV, however, Leo's role in commanding the defence during the siege became his strongest asset in securing his position. Leo demonstrated that he could guarantee 'safety and protection' to the citizens and claim divine favour. These aspects were important for reestablishing imperial authority, especially after a quarter of a century of violent power-takeovers. The emperor and his advisers made much of the victory in 717/18. Among various measures, two feasts were added to the religious calendar which contributed significantly to the expansion of the cult of the cross in the city, and the main commemorative procession presented Leo as its saviour. I believe that this claim met with resistance from the patriarch, which manifested itself in a tacit feud concerning the means of salvation – it is noteworthy that the 'saviour' epithet accorded to Leo's son Constantine during the council in Hiereia (754) drew some of the most passionate opposition from the iconophiles in later periods.

Constantine nurtured his father's legacy and expanded on his policies, which meant the memory of Leo III as saviour of Constantinople from the Arab assault in 717/18 was

[456] Magdalino 2012, 150.
[457] The text and translation in Gero 1973, 150–2.
[458] *Ekloge*, *prooimion*, 39–40.

well-maintained for more than two generations. Although the successful damnatio memoriae in later period leaves us with a limited access to the effects of these measures on Leo's legacy, scholars agree that both Isaurian rulers were extremely popular among the common populace, and we will see further evidence that Leo remained an attractive imperial model in later years: the anti-iconoclast author behind the *Scriptor Incertus* confirms that Leo was still 'famous' in the capital eighty years after his death.

CHAPTER TWO

Emperor Constantine V (r. 741–75) – New challenges and the height of imperial power[459]

Noble birth and birth right: Commemorating Leo III

A precise date of Constantine V's birth is not stated in any of the sources. Yet the date matters for our present purposes because Nikephoros' account tells us that at the time he was writing (the current consensus is c. 792), there existed a version of history in which Constantine was born just before the Arab army lifted the siege and retreated: that is, just before the salvation of the New Jerusalem. If this was indeed the case, Leo, and later Constantine, could have made use of this auspicious omen in propagating their imperial ideology, especially following the conclusions from the first chapter concerning the impact and importance of the event for Leo's reign. Menander Rhetor's rhetorical precepts for a *basilikos logos*, for example, characterise the protagonists' birth as an important category and recommend that:

> if any divine sign occurred at the time of his [i.e. emperor's] birth, either on land or in the heavens or on the sea, compare the circumstances with those of Romulus, Cyrus, and similar stories, since in these cases also there were miraculous happenings connected with their birth […] If there is anything like this in connection with the emperor, work it up; if it is possible to invent, and to do this convincingly, do not hesitate; the subject permits this, because the audience has no choice but to accept the encomium without examination.[460]

It is not hard to imagine that a court panegyrist, following these, or similar, rhetorical precepts, would 'work up' the fact of Constantine's birth, interpreting it as a prophetic sign of the future victories and divine grace shown to Constantine. It is true that we have no evidence of a court panegyrists during this period, but I think we should factor in at least the evidence from 'Trajan'. As observed, the structure of the reign of Constantine IV shows evidence of following the precepts for *basilikos logos* at least. Moreover, Constantine V's birth fell very early in Leo's reign, and the former's coronation was a highly important event, so I do believe it is not impossible to imagine that there was someone to be found to mark the occasion with an appropriate speech, even if in a comparably lower rhetorical level. That the practice of delivering encomia did not die out during the so-called dark ages, is hinted at by Constantine V's enemies during the council in Nikaia

[459] For the overview of the chapter, see the Introduction, 'Outline of the Thesis'.
[460] Menander Rhetor, tr. Russell and Wilson, 80–3.

in 787, during which Epiphanios the Deacon contended what is and what is not appropriate theme for an imperial *enkomion*.[461] While positive evidence is scarce, we do have plenty of negative ones, and *psogos* was by definition an inversion of *enkomion*.[462] The best example for the present context is the baptism incident surviving in invectives against Constantine, according to which the emperor supposedly defecated in the baptism font.[463] Whether actual or invented,[464] this incident was presented as an unmistakeable sign of evil to come, of the Antichrist himself.

The motives for a praise also did not lack. A son born just before the Arab retreat would have served the emperor Leo as a confirmation of dynastic legitimacy, with which he was much concerned, but also of divine favour.[465] Leo III and his advisers built much around and on the salvation in 718, and there should be little doubt that Constantine was included in the commemorative procession as soon as he was old enough.[466] A possible evidence that the young emperor was part of the triumphal procession may be found in a rare issue of copper coins featuring busts of Leo and Constantine holding the cross potent between them on the obverse, and a mark of value between vertically inscribed 'XXX' and 'NNN', which has been interpreted as an abbreviated form of *Xristos Nika* (Χριστὸς νικᾷ) (fig. 16).[467] Finally, Constantine himself would have found this 'fact' of his birth useful too. There is no reason to presume that the commemoration of 718 stopped after Leo's death, but during his exceptionally long reign, Constantine V celebrated triumphs of his own, and, as we shall see, he was very conscious about promoting them through public spectacles and more permanently – his success on the battlefield is one aspect that even the most toxic invectives against him cannot conceal fully. If we imagine that Constantine did receive an *enkomion*, perhaps to mark one of his triumphal celebrations, an enkomiast would need to look no further to begin his praise than to remind the audience that as soon as the emperor entered the world, the 'Hagarenes moved off in great shame'.[468] It is worth repeating that such promotion of the hated heretic would be something that Theophanes and/or his source would have a good reason to omit.

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[461] *ACO*, 780.21–30. See below, n. 575.
[462] Menander Rhetor, 76–95. The *enkomion* and invective were also the primary themes of the epideictic speeches, ibid., I, 2–3. See the Introduction, *Remarks on Method*.
[463] See below, n. 478.
[464] A baby defecating in the baptismal font is not an impossible incident, but the way it is presented in the sources is tendentious and certainly not to be trusted. See the recent comments on this incident by Lilie 2014, 166.
[465] Dagron 1994, 130, points out that the birth of a son ties to the biblical idea that God marks his approval or disavowal of an emperor by giving or denying him successors.
[466] It can be compared with the participation of young Michael III in the triumphal procession of Sunday of Orthodoxy, according to *De Theophili absolutione*, 110.
[467] DOC3.1, 233–4, 259–60, pl. IV, nos. 36–7. It must be stressed that the attribution is difficult, and while Grierson advances good numismatic arguments for dating the coin to Leo III's reign, see Penna 1990, 143–5, for a proposal that it may belong to the brief reign of Artabasdos.
[468] Theophanes, 399, tr. Mango and Scott, 550.

When was Constantine V born?

When was Constantine V born then? Based on Theophanes' chronicle, which places the birth in the year 6211, i.e. between 1 September 718 and 31 August 719, and the information provided by the patriarch Nikephoros in his third *Antirrhetikos* that Constantine lived fifty-eight years,[469] Rochow asserts that 'muß Konstantin zwischen dem 1. und dem 14. September 718 geboren sein'.[470] I believe that this date is not as certain as Rochow suggests, and deserves reconsideration.

In establishing this date, Rochow takes for granted Theophanes' account and ignores Nikephoros' *Breviarium*, according to which Constantine V was born in July 718, roughly one month before the Arabs retreated.[471] The episodes around Constantine's birth are almost identical and come in the same order in Nikephoros and Theophanes, presumably both still relying on 'Trajan'. The sequence of events is presented in the following table:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">• The beginning of the siege, concluding with the burning of the Arab fleet hidden in the bay of Nikomedia

Nikephoros §54. Theophanes, AM 6209, 395–8.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• The rebellion in Sicily

Nikephoros §55. Theophanes, AM 6210, 398–9.</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Constantine's birth

Nikephoros §55.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• The Arabs retreat

Nikephoros § 56. Theophanes, AM 6210, 399.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>• Constantine's birth and baptism

Theophanes, AM 6211, 399–400.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Anastasios' conspiracy

Nikephoros § 57. Theophanes AM 6211, 400–1.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Constantine's coronation

Nikephoros § 58. Theophanes AM 6212, 401.</td></tr>
</table>

The question then is the arrangement of narrative. In this regard, it is important to underline that Theophanes inserts an entry from his 'eastern' source at the exact spot where Constantine's birth is placed in Nikephoros:

[469] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 505 D.
[470] Rochow 1994, 7.
[471] Nikephoros, §56. See the quote in full on the following page.

Nikephoros § 56, tr. Mango, 124	Theophanes AM 6210, 399, tr. Mango and Scott, 550
After this a son was born to the emperor, whom he named Constantine. And on the 15th of the following month of August the entire Saracen armament, both cavalry and fleet, withdrew from the imperial city.	When Oumaros had become master of the Arabs, he ordered Maslamas to turn back, and, on 15 August, the Hagarenes moved off in great shame.

The insertion in Theophanes may be thematically and logically sound, but it is factually incorrect, because 'Umar became the caliph much earlier.[472] This is another evidence that Theophanes edited the text around Constantine's birth. Although the *Chronographia* is uniquely chronologically oriented, Theophanes very often distorted the chronology for the sake of narrative.[473] I propose that such was the case with Constantine's birth.

It is further worth noting that approximately at this point a switch in source material occurs, as both Nikephoros and Theophanes begin to draw on some anti-iconoclast text(s).[474] The contrast is more visible in Theophanes, where the text becomes increasingly hostile from the moment of Constantine's birth. Emperor Leo III was still an ἐυσεβὴς βασιλεὺς,[475] but only a couple of pages later becomes δυσσεβεῖ; that is, as soon as Constantine enters the scene presented as an apocalyptic prophecy:[476] '[i]n this year, a son was born to the impious emperor Leo, namely the yet more impious Constantine, the precursor of the Antichrist'.[477] The rest of the paragraph is dedicated to the baptism ceremony, with particular focus on the notorious incident: '[w]hile the patriarch Germanos was baptizing there the successor to their wicked empire, namely Constantine, a terrible and evil-smelling sign was manifested in his very infancy, for he defecated in the holy font'.[478] The scene follows and reinforces further the initial prophecy,[479] providing an 'evil sign' to validate it, and the concluding interpretation is pronounced by

[472] Mango and Scott, 551, n. 6.
[473] The most drastic example of this is the beginning of the reign of Constantine the Great with four 'empty' years in a row as a result of piling up of several important events together for the sake of narrative: AM 5798–801. The same phenomenon occurs on many other occasions later, even when the events described were contemporary with the author's life, like the transition of power from the crippled Staurakios to Michael I, thus the section in Theophanes AM 6303, 492.28–493.14, belongs to AM 6304, Mango and Scott, 675–7, n. 28. See further Mango and Scott's introductory notes on the issues of chronology, Ibid., lxiii–lxxiv. See also Tamarkina 2015, and Sirotenko 2018, for recent studies with further examples demonstrating how Theophanes regularly bent chronology for narrative's sake.
[474] Mango and Scott, lxxxviii, no. 18.
[475] Theophanes, 396.7–8.
[476] Ibid., 399.28.
[477] Theophanes, 399.27–400.1, tr. Mango and Scott, 551.
[478] Theophanes, 400.7–10, tr. Mango and Scott, 551–2.
[479] Quasi-prophetic statements occur often in Theophanes, especially in case of impending death of hated characters, e.g. Constantine V, Theophanes, 437.17–19, tr. Mango and Scott, 604–5, 'it was not long, however, before divine Justice delivered him [Constantine V] into the murderer's hands'; or Nikephoros I, Theophanes, 489.16–17, tr. Mango and Scott, 672, 'but he [Nikephoros] was confounded in his imaginations, he whom God was to slay'.

the Patriarch Germanos—a figure empowered with authority by the author—who 'declared prophetically that the great evil would befall the Christians and the Church on account of Constantine'.[480]

Clearly then, the main event, described in considerable detail,[481] is the baptism, and the birth is integrated into the narrative construction building up a negative image of Constantine, employing what Genette termed *analepsis*.[482] Birth and baptism were two separate events yet with theme taking precedence over chronology in Theophanes' narrative, it seems likely that he subsumed the birth under the baptism, which indeed took place the following (Byzantine) year.[483] There is no doubt that Theophanes had strong ideological motivations to do so, and there is sufficient evidence of his conscious editing when it came to the emperor Constantine V.[484]

Whatever was the source for Constantine's birth for our chroniclers, it seems that Theophanes made a more inventive use of it – from the narrative point of view, the birth goes more naturally with the baptism, but that does not mean that his is the correct version.[485] Also, if Constantine was born in July, he would still be fifty-eight years old at the time of his death, and, in this case, both dates would be provided by the same author, Patriarch Nikephoros. In conclusion, I propose that the information provided by Theophanes needs to be treated more cautiously, and that the birth of Constantine is at least equally possible to have occurred in mid-July 718; in the light of the later iconophile propaganda and the effort Theophanes invested in editing the chapter on Constantine, this latter is, in fact, the more likely option.

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[480] Theophanes, 400.11–13, Mango and Scott, 552. The *Chronographia* later presents Patriarch Germanos pronouncing another negative prophecy, in the style of Apocalypse of Daniel. Theophanes, 407, tr. Mango and Scott, 563–4, writes: 'the lawless emperor in his raging fury against the correct faith summoned the blessed Germanus and began to entice him with flattering words. The blessed bishop said to him, 'We have heard it said that there will be a destruction of the holy and venerable icons, but not in your reign.' When the other compelled him to declare in whose reign that would be, he said, That of Konon.' Then Leo said, 'Truly, my baptismal name is Konon'.' It is possible that Germanos acquired a reputation for prophecies, reflected in an attribution of a dream book to his name, pseudonimy being a common 'publishing practice' of this type of literature, Oberhelman 2008, 13. On the importance of prophecies in Byzantium, see Magdalino 2007b. The penchant for prophecies in Constantinople at the time is attested in the peculiar *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*. Anderson 2011a, recently argued that the motivation behind the *Parastaseis* was to present the group of people as 'philosophers', that is those who can make predictions from the ancient statues.

[481] Apart from the dubious incident, the description of the baptism features also the coronation of the Augusta Maria, Leo's wife, who distributed largesse later, and the mentioning of the leading men of the *themata* and senate adopting Constantine, Theophanes, 400.2–17, Mango and Scott, 551–2.

[482] Guillemette and Lévesque 2016, section 2.5.1.

[483] It is said that the baptism took place on 25th of December, that is on Christmas day, which would be in line with the regular practice of scheduling imperial events on important religious feasts, Dagron 2003, 82–3. It should be added, however, that this is a correction by de Boor based on the Latin translation; Greek manuscripts have 25th of October as the date, which would be closer to the actual birth, whenever it was, Mango and Scott, 552, n. 2. There was no strict rule as to how much time should pass between the birth of a child and the baptism, but the tendency was to schedule it as soon as possible, Baun 2010, esp. 115–26. However, the baptism of the imperial heir was politically significant event, and Leo III and his advisers could decide to postpone it if thought politically sound. For example, Leo VI waited more than seven months to have his son Constantine Porphyrogennetos baptised on Epiphany 906, Logothete A, ch. 133.325–8. PmbZ# 23734.

[484] See Ch. 3, n. 1089.

[485] That a 'better written' history is not necessarily a more reliable one has been discussed by Karlin-Hayter 1971.

Constantine V Porphyrogennetos

Beside the potential importance given to the date of Constantine's birth in relation to the Arab retreat, we have better evidence that the emperor used his auspicious birth in the purple, as it were, to assert his legitimacy. Tower 57 of the Theodosian land walls, belonging to the group that was restored after the great earthquake in 740, bears the following brick inscription:

> Νικ[ᾷ] ἡ τύχη Κωνσταντίνου Πορφυρογεννήτου μεγάλο[υ] βασιλ[έως]
> 'May the fortune of Constantine Porphyrogennetos great *basileus* be victorious!'[486]

Foss had earlier attributed the inscription to the emperor Constantine VI, while later Gero was the first to hypothesize that it might actually belong to the period of Constantine V's reign prior to coronation of Leo IV.[487] Recently, Loaëc (re)examined the whole group of towers (18 to 63) restored after the earthquake, and convincingly argued that the repair of the tower 57 must be dated to the period of its immediate aftermath, i.e. to the early years of Constantine V's reign:

> Or, la proximité géographique, mais aussi la ressemblance troublante de ces inscriptions, m'ont amené à revoir la question. Il est en effet étonnant qu'au milieu de cette quarantaine de tours, deux aient pu être restaurées 35 ans après le séisme, sur un modèle strictement identique.[488]

He further proposes that the renovation was complete, and the inscription set up, in the aftermath of Artabasdos' usurpation (741–3), when the emperor Constantine V took back the capital.[489] This is a sensible proposal, and can be expanded further.

The re-dated inscription is for the time being the earliest attestation of the *porphyrogennetos* title,[490] but, as Dagron demonstrated, the 'purple-born' concept existed long before, stretching back to the end of the fourth century.[491] In its basic sense, the *porphyrogennetos* concept signifies a son born to a ruling emperor – to be distinguished from sons a ruler may have had before he ascended the throne for example.[492] The usurpation of Artabasdos, that followed immediately after Leo III's death, was a serious blow to Constantine's legitimacy. By styling himself as *porphyrogennetos*, Constantine thus reasserted his legitimacy by reminding everyone that he was the 'purple-born' ruler, son of

[486] Loaëc 2018, §26–8, fig. 11.
[487] Foss 1967, 310. Gero 1977, 9, n.3.
[488] Loaëc 2018, quote at §1, further discussion at §48–9.
[489] Loaëc 2018, §55.
[490] Previously, Dagron 1994, 113, tracked that Constantine V's son Leo IV was referred as *porphyrogennetos* in a document originating from southern Italy.
[491] Ibid.
[492] The concept was analyzed in detail by Dagron 1994.

the emperor Leo III. Moreover, it is important to remember that this was not merely an inscription on a tower, but that an accompanying ceremony must have been organized at the walls in order to mark these repairs. It seems likely that during these celebrations, Constantine was acclaimed as *porphyrogennetos* by the demes – only a few years earlier, a similar ceremony had been organized after the first set of repairs, when the demes acclaimed both Constantine and his father.[493]

That Constantine relied on the figure of his father in order to affirm his legitimacy is well documented in our sources; as the most obvious sign of dynastic continuity, Constantine named his son and heir Leo (born in 750), after his own father.[494] Building on Loaëc's analysis, we may add that the inscription on the tower 57 shows very close signs of continuity with Leo III's reign; both the acclamation νικᾷ ἡ τύχη and the title μέγας βασιλεύς are attested on a number of inscriptions naming Leo and Constantine together.[495] In fact, the only difference is that the epithet *porphyrogennetos* now replaces Leo – yet by its very nature it still evokes Constantine's father. Constantine's early gold coins reveal a similar continuity. As it is often noted, Constantine made an important innovation by featuring the portrait of his deceased father on the obverse, underlining the dynastic continuity.[496] From an ideological perspective, this was indeed an innovation, but if we look at the designs from a purely iconographic perspective, there is considerable continuity. Constantine's early designs very closely follow those of his father, with one notable change: instead of the globus cruciger, the figures of both Leo and Constantine now hold the cross potent in their right hands (Fig. 17).[497] No doubt this relates to the prominent position of the cross under the emperor Leo III as explored in the first chapter. Constantine may have reinforced the legitimacy of his position through imperial law, too. Humphreys notes that one of the appendices to the *Ekloge* (AE.X) emphasised the right of children to inherit, and argued that it was probably published in the early 750s, in response to the legitimacy crisis following Artabasdos' usurpation.[498] Moreover, a promulgation of an appendix to the *Ekloge* would in itself be a reminder of Leo, as the law was originally published under the names of Leo and Constantine.

[493] Parastaseis, §3, tr. Cameron and Herrin, 58–9, Λέων καὶ Κωνσταντίνος εἰς κράτος ἐνίκησεν, 'Leo and Constantine have mightily conquered!' Note the necessary correction of the text established by Kresten, 1994.
[494] Nikephoros §69. Theophanes, 426. Leo IV PmbZ, #4243.
[495] Towers 25, 45, 47–8, Loaëc 2018, §§5–15, figs. 5–7.
[496] DOC3.1, 292. Füeg 2007, 15–7. Dagron 1994, 112. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 226–7.
[497] DOC3.1, pl. viii, nos. 1b–g.4. Füeg 2007, pl. 55, 57. As with number of aspects of Isaurian ideology, this conceptual design has been introduced by the emperor Justinian II – the only emperor to employ it before Constantine V. The emperor holding the cross potent in his hand is present on several of Justinian II's designs from both of his reigns, featuring the standing figure or the bust of the emperor opposite of Christ, or holding the cross together with his heir. See various issues at DOC2.2, pl. xxxvii and xliii, especially pl. xliii, nos. 1.2–7 (Fig. 7), which may be regarded as close comparison since the emperor is represented en buste, holding the cross in the right hand.
[498] Humphreys 2015, 151.

It seems that Constantine V placed further stress on his birth, drawing legitimacy from the figure of his father during the Iconoclast Council of Hiereia in 754. In the final section of the *Horos* (definition) of the council, customary acclamations were addressed to the emperors Constantine (V) and his son Leo (IV), and an unnamed *augusta*, identified by Gero as Constantine V's mother Maria[499]:

> Eternal is the memory of Leo and Constantine! […] You have confirmed orthodoxy! […] Eternal is the memory of Constantine and Leo! Lord guard him [Constantine] who was orthodox from birth! […] Long live the most pious empress! […] You [Constantine] have utterly destroyed all idolatry![500]

That the first of these two acclamations is in the order of Leo and Constantine, rather than Constantine and Leo, suggests that the first figure addressed was in fact Constantine V's father, not his son; after all, Leo III was still represented on coins. Gero further proposed that the presence of Constantine's mother, Leo III's wife, was there to strengthen continuity with the policy of Leo as well as dynastic legitimacy.[501] The praise that Constantine was orthodox 'from birth', or 'of orthodox descent' seems to underline this link even further;[502] it also suggests that Constantine perceived 'noble descent' as important.

Whether the date of Constantine's birth, certainly close to the Arab retreat, played a role in praise addressed to the emperor at any point remains hypothetical. However, the surviving evidence shows that Constantine 'reached for his birth', so to speak, when his legitimacy was in crisis, primarily to underline the connection with the figure of his father Leo III, stressing the dynastic legitimacy. Relying on his father's legacy, and representing continuity with his policies is characteristic of the early period of Constantine's reign.

Deeds of war: Constantine V's enduring reputation as a triumphant emperor

There is no doubt that Constantine's military achievements were the most significant aspect of his enduring popularity. I have argued that the emperor may have been associated with the triumph from his very birth, and that he was included in the commemorative triumphal procession as soon as he was old enough. Although we hear nothing of it from our sources, no doubt Leo groomed his son to be an emperor, and above all a military leader. We do know at least that Constantine participated in the great victory

[499] Gero 1977, 93, n. 139.
[500] *ACO*, 778.9–26; tr. Gero 1977, 93–4.
[501] Gero 1977, 93, n. 139.
[502] *ACO*, 778.18, τὸν ἀπὸ γένους ὀρθόδοξον, κύριε, φύλαξον, tr. Gero 1977, 93, 'Lord guard him who was orthodox from birth!'; tr. Sahas 1986, 166, 'Lord protect him, who is of orthodox descent'.

against an Arab army at the battle of Akroinon (May 740),[503] possibly commemorated through the inscription on the repaired tower 56 of the Theodosian walls and accompanying ceremony.[504] During his exceptionally long reign, Constantine V continued to increase his triumphal record against the internal and external enemies, and even against supernatural forces, which he made sure were all properly advertised. In this section, I look into Constantine's triumphs against external enemies and the manner in which they may have been advertised in Constantinople, and the emperor's role in military organization, all contributing to his reputation as a victorious ruler and an appealing imperial model.

External enemies: The Arabs

Constantine's victories against the Arabs (mostly in the early 750s) and particularly against the Bulgarians (c. 759–75), were the most prominent aspect of his enduring commemoration as a triumphant emperor. This perception is encapsulated in the so-called *Brussels Chronicle*, an exceptionally rare positive testimony of Constantine's reign within surviving Byzantine literature. The chronicle states that Constantine had 'smitten Bulgaria and destroyed many cities of the Saracens, and in his time there was a profound peace at land and at sea'.[505] Although the statement is very brief, it corresponds well with what we hear from other sources. Constantine's success against the Arabs came only in the first half of his reign when the caliphate was going through the civil war, and consisted mainly of sacking, and dismantling the fortifications of a number of cities on the eastern frontier, most notably Germanikeia, Melitene and Theodosioupolis.[506] Surviving Byzantine accounts are very brief and mainly concerned with the population transplanted to Thrace from the conquered cities and surrounding regions.[507] Nikephoros does mention that after the conquest of Melitene, Constantine 'carried off a great number of captives and booty',[508] which is corroborated by the more detailed Arab

[503] Theophanes, 411.
[504] Reconstructed by Loaës 2018, §§22–5, fig. 10, + Λέων καὶ Κ [ωνσταντῖνος. . .ἐ] ν θεῷ νικ [ηφόροι ?.
[505] *Brussels Chronicle*, 31.26–9, οὗτος ἐπάταξε τὴν Βουλγαρίαν καὶ ἐπόρθησε πόλεις πολλὰς τῶν Σαρρακηνῶν · καὶ γέγονεν ἐπὶ αὐτοῦ βαθεῖα εἰρήνη κατά τε γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν. The Brussels chronicle is an anonymous chronological text, probably composed in Constantinople post-1034, covering Roman rulers from Julius Caesar until Romanos III Argyros. Only the section between Constantine the Great and Michael III (inclusively) features more than just a chronological note, containing occasionally unique testimonies, Constantine V being one example. See the introduction to the editio princeps, Cumont 1896, 7–16, and more recently Külzer 1991.
[506] Nikephoros, §67 (Germanikeia); §70 (Melitene). Theophanes, 422 (Germanikeia), 427 (Theodosiopolis and Melitene). See the summary in Rochow 1994, 73–4, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 166–8, with further literature.
[507] Nikephoros, §73, Theophanes 422, 430.
[508] Nikephoros, §70, tr. Mango.

tradition.[509] We also find further information about the sack of Theodosioupolis in Łewond's chronicle.[510] The Armenian chronicler relates that the emperor Constantine left with a large and well-armed force.[511] After capturing Theodosioupolis, Constantine had its fortifications dismantled and seized large quantities of gold and silver from the treasury where he also found some kind of relic of the cross: 'il trouva dans le trésor le signe de la croix du Seigneur, qu'il prit et emporta avec lui'.[512] The text also makes clear that a portion of the Arab population was taken into slavery; in addition, the Christian inhabitants (identified as Syrians and Armenians by Theophanes[513]) apparently asked to leave with the emperor:

> Et de nombreux habitants des cantons demandèrent au roi à rejeter loin d'eux le carcan du joug de la servitude d'Ismaël et à partir à sa suite. Et sur l'ordre qu'il donna, les habitants, préparant immédiatement leurs bagages, partirent en tête, se réfugiant dans la puissance de la croix du Seigneur et dans la gloire du roi. Ils abandonnèrent leur terre natale et, ayant émigré, ils se rendirent dans la région du pieux roi.[514]

According to this testimony then, this was a highly successful campaign from which Emperor Constantine had to show prisoners, a large booty, and even a relic of the cross. Capturing such relic from the 'enemies of the cross' would have been an important event considering the pre-eminence of the cult of the cross under the Isaurian dynasty. If the account is true, it is not difficult to imagine a triumphal entry into Constantinople showing rich spoils, with the relic of the cross given a prominent position,[515] especially knowing that Constantine made an excellent use of public display.[516]

The account is a sound reminder about the incentives of a successful campaign, and consequently, the popularity of Constantine among the army. As mentioned, numismatists note that a sizable number of *miliaresia* in this period were visibly struck over Arab *dirhems*,[517] and Constantine's campaigns, such as the one described here, were surely

[509] Brooks 1900, 731–2, n. 16, and id., 1901, 88–9. For oriental sources deriving from Theophilus of Edessa, see Hoyland 2011, 264 (Germanikeia), 289–90 (Melitene and Armenia), and 300 (Theodosioupolis), with references.
[510] Łewond, Fr. tr. Martin-Hisard, 142–5.
[511] Łewond, Fr. tr. Martin-Hisard, 142, n. 696, proposes that these were the *tagmata* corps.
[512] Łewond, Fr. tr., Martin-Hisard, 144–5.
[513] Theophanes, 429, tr. Mango and Scott, 593.
[514] Łewond, Fr. tr., Martin-Hisard, 144–5.
[515] We find an example of a ceremonial cross present in the final section of the imperial triumph of Emperor Theophilos in front of the Chalke, on which see Ch. 3, 1195. Also, during Basil I's triumph, following the victory over the Paulicians, it is said that, *Three Treatises*, 144, tr. Haldon, 145, the ceremonial procession was preceded by 'the blessed, great and bejewelled cross' while crossing the portion of the *Mese* passing the Forum of Constantine.
[516] To be sure, there is no mention of a triumphal celebration in surviving Byzantine accounts, and since both Nikephoros and Theophanes do relate Constantine's triumphs celebrated after his victories against the Bulgarians, it is less likely that there was such triumph proper so to speak. Still, if the account is true, the emperor would have had to come back to the city somehow, and even if it was not a staged *adventus*, it would have still been an opportunity to show the spoils of war and demonstrate imperial victory. In any case, there was no 'casual' entry of the emperor into Constantinople, especially coming back from a successful campaign.
[517] Penna 1990, 131–4.

one avenue for the *dirhems* to arrive at Constantinople. Moreover, the *Ekloge*, which shows great care for soldiers overall,[518] dedicates its final stipulation to the division of the spoils of war.[519] It prescribes that the state takes one sixth, and that the rest should be distributed to the surviving soldiers 'great and small'.[520] While the officers were excluded from the division, since their salaries were considered enough, it is added that a general may take a portion of the sixth to award an officer if he had distinguished himself.[521]

The testimony preserved in Łewond represents another rare example of a surviving positive treatment of Emperor Constantine V, especially visible from the last portion relating that the people found 'refuge in the power of the cross and in the glory of the emperor' and that they left to the land of the 'pious king'. This strongly suggests that at least one of the underlying sources for this section of the text was pro-Constantine, and it may have been coming from Byzantium, especially since this is not an isolated example of a pro-Iconoclast/Isaurian tenor in Łewond's history.[522] Such treatment was highly surprising for Greenwood:

> What is so striking about this passage is the positive assessment of Constantine V; for an iconoclast emperor to be described as 'pious' is most unexpected. It has also proved difficult to interpret. It may derive from an underlying source and been retained in error by Łewond but this contenion is conjectural.[523]

The positive memory of the emperor Constantine when facing the Arabs has other parallels in eastern sources.[524] The only such entry preserved in Theophanes, so uncharacteristic for the treatment of the emperor Constantine V in this text, is derived from Theophanes' 'eastern source'; he records that Salim, the governor of Egypt:

> invaded the Roman country with a force of 80,000 and, when he had come to Cappadocia, he heard that Constantine was taking up arms against him. Taking fright, he returned empty-handed without causing any damage, except that he took a few Armenians who had joined him.[525]

[518] See most recently Humphreys 2015, 125–7.
[519] *Ekloge*, 18.945–58. Humphreys 2015, 126, considers this stipulation as one of the most original contributions of the *Ekloge*, and highlights that its very position at the end of the work is already suggestive of the importance of the military and incentivizing the soldiers. On the importance of emperor's encouragement and incentivizing soldiers, see also Kaegi 1981, 239–40.
[520] *Ekloge*, 18.950–3.
[521] Ibid., 18.953–8.
[522] As discussed in the previous chapter.
[523] Greenwood 2012, 140.
[524] See the summary of the Armenian and Syriac sources in Gero 1977, 176–85.
[525] Theophanes, 430, tr. Mango and Scott 594.

We find a similar testimony in the so-called *Chronicle of 1234*, where it is said that Constantine was 'a wise man and one feared by the enemy'.[526]

To my knowledge, apart from Gero's work, there has been no study of the positive memory of Constantine V surviving in eastern texts, in terms of the underlying sources, but I think it is reasonable to assume that some must be deriving from lost pro-Constantine Byzantine accounts.[527] Hoyland, at least, makes a broader conclusion that 'there was considerably more Byzantine history writing at this time [i.e. eighth century] than is usually allowed for',[528] and we may infer that emperor's victories were one likely aspect to have been recorded.

External Enemies: The Bulgarians

Among the victories against external enemies, those achieved against the Bulgarians were celebrated as particularly important, both in Constantine's own time and after. The distinction in the testimony of the *Brussels Chronicle* is clear, Constantine had 'smitten Bulgaria', while he 'destroyed many cities of the Saracens'.[529] This memory of Constantine as perhaps the original 'Bulgar-slayer'[530] is visible even more in the late tenth-century history of Leo the Deacon, who writes that '[t]he Mysians [i.e. Bulgarians] are said to have been defeated only by Constantine Kopronymos'.[531] Political value of the memory of Constantine V's triumphs against the Bulgarians came to the fore most prominently in the early ninth century when the empire suffered a series of humiliating defeats by the Bulgarians led by the khan Krum; so much so that it was one of the major reasons for the reversal of religious policy back to Iconoclasm.[532]

During the second half of his long reign, Constantine V devoted much attention and resources to the Balkans.[533] The first significant measure was the construction of forts in Thrace which were populated with the people transplanted from Asia Minor fol-

[526] Tr. Gero 1977, 182, n. 22, with references.
[527] Gero 1977, 184–5.
[528] Hoyland 2011, 23–6, quote at 26.
[529] See above, n. 505.
[530] The epithet famously appended to Emperor Basil II (r. 976–1025), although more than a century after his death, Stephenson 2000; PmbZ #20838.
[531] Leo the Deacon, 104.17–21; tr. Talbot and Sullivan, 154.
[532] See Ch. 3, *Leo V emulating the 'famous' Isaurians.*
[533] See the summary of Constantine's policy in the Balkans in Rochow 1994, 89–105, Auzépy 2009, 257–8, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 163–6.

lowing the campaigns against the caliphate, 'and bountifully endowed with all necessities'.[534] The improved infrastructure and increased administrative and commercial activity in Thrace is further reflected in sigillographic and archaeological data.[535] It is noteworthy that these measures alone were considered an achievement and remembered as such in the early ninth century,[536] contributing to Constantine's positive memory of success against the Bulgarians.

The improved situation in Thrace was secured largely through military action. In the last fifteen years of his reign (759/60–75), Constantine V campaigned incessantly against the Bulgarians. Scholars have identified nine campaigns,[537] during which the Byzantine army achieved several major victories; those near Anchialos (30 June 763) and Lithosoria (October 773) were apparently the most important, each celebrated with an imperial triumph. Finally, Constantine even died coming back from what was his last campaign against the Bulgarians (on 14 September 775).[538]

In his *Breviarium*, our earliest surviving Byzantine historical text treating the reign of Constantine, Nikephoros preserves some of the material that must be derived either from official imperial documents – perhaps the victory bulletins possibly composed by the emperor Constantine himself [539] – or more likely a literary source that was glorifying Constantine's victories. Nikephoros records that when the Bulgarians rose against the empire because of the forts being built in Thrace, the emperor 'marched out against them and put them to flight. He pursued them mightily and killed many Bulgarians'.[540] In the following battle at Markellai the emperor is again said to have 'put them to flight, and killed many of them. Being thus worsted, they petitioned for peace and delivered hostages from among their children'.[541] Even Theophanes left, perhaps by an accident, one instance which celebrates Constantine's victory at Lithosoria: '[Constantine] fell upon the Bulgarians, whom he routed in a great victory [νῖκος μέγα]'.[542] These scarce instances only hint at the triumphal tone of the lost sources which celebrated

[534] Upon seeing the construction of cities, the Bulgarians asked for taxes, and the refusal on the Byzantine side led to a war. Nikephoros §73, tr. Mango, 145.
[535] *ZV*, 138ff., note that all the place names recorded on the last portion of dated seals of Imperial *Kommerkia* (for the period 751–833) are those from the West, and mainly in Thrace. Mango and Ševčenko 1972, analysed the inscription concerning the repair of a bridge in Thrace near modern day Vize, probably repaired by a local army commander in preparation for a campaign.
[536] In his *psogos* against Constantine V written after the return to Iconoclasm, Nikephoros *Antirrhetikos III*, 512 B, writes to the new emperor Leo V, 'but you say he [Constantine V] has fortified the strongholds of Thrace'.
[537] Nikephoros, §§73, 76–7, 79, 82. Theophanes, 429, 431–3, 436–7, 446–8. Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 508 A–509 A. The campaign from 763 is mentioned in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §31–2. On Constantine's campaigns in Bulgaria see Beševliev 1971, with older literature. See also Rochow 1994, 93–102, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 165.
[538] Theophanes, 448. Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 505 B–508 A.
[539] According to Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 508 B.
[540] Nikephoros, §73, tr. Mango 145.
[541] Nikephoros, §73, tr. Mango, 145.
[542] Theophanes, 447.22–6, tr. Mango and Scott, 617.

Constantine's victories, but we can infer more from the description of Constantine's triumphs.

Constantine V's triumphs

Anchialos 763 and Lithosoria 773

The battle at the plain of Anchialos on 30 June 763 was the most prominent victory to that point in Constantine's reign, and for some at least remained so in the period after. In the early ninth century, Nikephoros begins his take on the battle by saying '[t]here are some to describe his [Constantine's] victories or to enumerate them, so we will recall one of the greatest'.[543] The whole campaign was a massive undertaking involving the coordinated movement of a huge number of land and naval forces, and all our sources agree that there were great casualties on both sides.[544] On his return to the capital, emperor Constantine celebrated his first triumph.[545] We hear from Nikephoros that the emperor wrote and sent the victory bulletins from the field,[546] which were almost certainly read publicly at an appropriate venue, probably in the Forum of Constantine or inside Hagia Sophia,[547] announcing the victory, and perhaps already the triumphal ceremony that was to follow. The triumphal procession entered the city probably through the Golden Gate with Constantine in 'full armour' accompanied by his army, dragging the defeated Bulgarians in shackles.[548] As the procession moved down the *Mese*, members of the demes acclaimed the emperor; he delivered the captives to the citizens, who performed the ritual execution of the prisoners outside the city gates.[549] In the last stage, the customary races were organized at the Hippodrome with further acclamations and the spoils of war prominently displayed – according to Nikephoros, two golden basins made in Sicily, each weighing eight hundred pounds of gold.[550]

Besides what can be considered traditional elements of imperial triumph[551] – the display of prisoners and spoils as proof of victory, and acclamations by the demes – two details are exceptional. McCormick noted that Theophanes, or his source, writes 'as

[543] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 508 A.
[544] Nikephoros, §76. Theophanes 432–3. In the early ninth century, Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 508 B, claimed that the bodies at the plains near Anchialos were still there to testify to the slaughter, which is, however, an ancient *topos*, and warrants suspicion.
[545] Nikephoros, §76. Theophanes, 433. Magdalino 2007b, 15, notes that this was the first recorded triumphal entry (*adventus*) since the emperor Herakleios. The standard treatment is McCormick 1986, 134–7.
[546] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 508 B, 'we can read the story in his letters to those who lived in the Queen city'.
[547] See the example of the proclamation of Herakleios' triumph over the Persians announced in Hagia Sophia, McCormick 1986, 70–1, with references.
[548] Nikephoros, §76. Theophanes, 433.
[549] Nikephoros, §76. Theophanes, 433.
[550] Nikephoros, §76. tr. Mango, 151.
[551] This is not disregarding the conclusion by McCormick 1986, 78, that '[t]here is no such thing as a 'typical' late Roman or Byzantine triumph ceremony'.

though the detail were noteworthy' that Constantine entered the city in 'full armour',[552] and more recently Parani addressed this detail in her study of imperial costume during triumphal processions.[553] She concludes that the emperors in fact almost never wore military armour, and that the example of Constantine V was a notable exception to this practice.[554] I think we can consider this detail as the symbolic expression of the 'militarization of the empire' under the Isaurian emperors,[555] and more specifically the 'warrior-type' image that the emperor Constantine sought to cultivate[556] – the legend of Constantine V slaying a dragon dedicates attention to the emperor's armour.[557] Moreover, according to the *Life* of St Stephen the Younger, not long after the triumph, the emperor organized another promotion of the army at the Hippodrome, with a notable use of military costume, although we hear nothing of emperor's garment. A certain George, the 'secret agent' of Constantine V who had been sent supposedly to trick the monk Stephen, was first ritually stripped of monastic garment, and then they put on him a helmet and a military coat, and the emperor personally hung a sword on his shoulder and promoted him to the rank of *strator*.[558]

The second aspect concerns the execution of prisoners. Nikephoros writes that Constantine 'delivered to the citizens and to the members of the so-called "colours" the captives he had brought so that they would kill them with their own hands,'[559] and Theophanes specifies that Constantine ordered the prisoners 'to be beheaded by the citizens outside the Golden Gate'.[560] As far as I am aware, this was a unique gesture and begs the question why would Constantine involve the citizens and members of the demes in such a bloody ritual? One possible answer might be the heavy casualties on the Byzantine side. By delivering the prisoners to the citizens for execution, Constantine symbolically shared his triumph with the citizens offering a kind of 'compensation', or rather a retribution, to the families affected by the loss. Although it is not the same kind of compensation, it is worth remembering that Emperor Michael I distributed five talents of gold to the families of the thematic soldiers fallen in the disastrous Bulgarian campaign of his

[552] McCormick 1986, 135.
[553] Parani 2013a.
[554] Ibid., 151–2, n. 58. She suggests that it might have been perceived as another 'error' of iconoclast emperor by the iconophile source.
[555] Ahrweiler 1975, 29–36. Auzépy 2009, 272–3.
[556] We may be certain that the emperor was pictured in military attire in some at least of the images produced at the time, and according to the mentioned testimony during Nikaia II, there have been plenty, see below, n. 575. See also Auzépy 2003.
[557] See the final section of this chapter.
[558] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §40, Fr. tr. and comments Auzépy, 236–7. See also Cameron 1976, 302–3.
[559] Nikephoros §73, tr. Mango, 145.
[560] Theophanes, 433, tr. Mango and Scott, 599. This was most likely the meadow near the Golden Gate where the emperor and his retinue would establish a temporary encampment before the triumphal entry, *Three Treatises*, 276.

predecessor, Emperor Nikephoros I (summer 811).[561] Moreover, according to Theophanes, Constantine V advertised his next triumph over the Bulgarians as a 'noble war' because, among other reasons, there was no 'shedding of Christian blood'.[562]

Leaving aside particular motivations, involving groups of subjects in public ceremonial (even if only 'ceremonially') is characteristic of Constantine's reign, and is a sign of his broader policy of relying on popular support.[563] In this regard, it is noteworthy that the only coin design issued under Emperor Constantine V considered as ceremonial was stamped only on copper denominations and it may well have been struck for and distributed during this very triumph in 763.[564] The design featured two seated emperors on a lyre-back throne on the obverse, and 'X' and 'N' – abbreviated Χριστὸς νικᾷ – flanking marks of value (M for *folles* and K for half-*folles*) on the reverse (fig. 18).[565] Additionally, the *folles* featured on the reverse the bust of Leo III seated above a base with ornamentation that, it has been proposed, looks much like the ornamentation in front of the imperial figures in the *kathisma* depicted on the Theodosius Obelisk.[566]

Our information about Constantine's second triumph in 773 is more limited. It is preserved only by Theophanes, who writes that:

> [Constantine] fell upon the Bulgarians, whom he routed in a great victory. He returned with much booty and many captives and celebrated a triumph in the City, which he entered with due ceremony. He called this war a 'noble war' inasmuch as he had met with no resistance and there had been no slaughter or shedding of Christian blood.[567]

Again, Theophanes' explanation as to why the emperor promoted this triumph as a 'noble war' suggests it might have been in contrast with the previous triumph when many Christians fell. In any case, this detail strongly suggests that Constantine embellished his second triumph with an ideological message.

Lasting promotion of triumphs

There is evidence, sometimes indirect, that emperor Constantine V took steps to promote his triumphs in a more lasting manner employing different strategies and media.

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[561] Theophanes, 494, tr. Mango and Scott, 677.
[562] Theophanes, 447, tr. Mango and Scott, 617.
[563] Partly based on this incident, Cameron 1976, 302–4, argued that under Constantine V, the factions played 'what amounts to a political role – though not, of course, an *independent* role'. For the policy of relying on popular support during the iconoclast period, see Auzépy 2009, 277. Magdalino 2015, 178.
[564] DOC3.1, 295, 307–8, pl. ix, nos. 13–14. Grierson, ibid., proposed the promotions of Constantine's other sons in 769 as the likely date, while Penna 1990, 147–8, suggested the triumphal celebrations in 763.
[565] DOC3.1, 295, 307–8, pl. IX, nos. 13–14.
[566] Füeg 2007, 19, with references.
[567] Theophanes, 447, tr. Mango and Scott, 617.

Nikephoros relates that soon after the 763 triumph, Constantine had his fourth son whom he named Niketas.[568] Being born shortly after what was hailed as a major victory, the name is hardly a coincidence. It is important to remember, as Magdalino stresses, that 'the naming of an imperial child was a matter of public concern, especially for the circus factions',[569] with whom Constantine had built a close relationship.[570] If the accompanying naming ceremony was performed in the way we know from *De Cerimoniis* – as one might expect from an emperor who took great care of 'public relations' – the citizens were reminded yet again of the imperial triumph. A section of them was involved through the members of the factions who took an important, even if only ceremonial role, pronouncing Niketas' name for the first time, symbolically representing the people of Constantinople adopting the imperial child.[571] Constantine named his first son and heir after his father Leo, strengthening the dynastic continuity, and the naming of Niketas offers an additional hint that names, including the accompanying ceremonies with their potential socio-political impact, were important for Constantine. In this regard, it is noteworthy that his second or third son was named Nikephoros.[572] These details also suggest that 'victory' was perhaps the most important 'term' during Constantine's reign.[573]

As McCormick pointed out, Constantine V almost certainly also propagated his triumphs in a more permanent form through visual material.[574] He drew attention to the very telling quote from the protocols of Nikaia II in 787, which is worth repeating in full. Refuting the acclamations accorded to Leo and Constantine during the Iconoclast council in Hiereia (754), Epiphanios the Deacon said:

> Rejecting the praises that it is apt and appropriate to deliver to emperors, they have attributed to them what refers to Christ our God. They should instead have spoken to them of their bravery, their victories in war, the rout of barbarians – events that many have commemorated by depicting them in images and on walls, drawing the beholders to love and emulation – and the acquisition of subjects, the decrees, the trophies, secular constitutions, civic ordinances, the restoration of cities. These are praises appropriate for emperors, and which inspire all their subjects with loyalty.[575]

[568] The order in Nikephoros, Breviarium is: §77 the triumph, §78 the follow-up campaign, §79 the birth of Niketas. On emperor Constantine V's family, see Mango 1982. Niketas, PmbZ #5403.
[569] Magdalino 2007a, 18.
[570] Cameron 1976, 302–4.
[571] De Cer., II, ch. 21 (the birth of an imperial child) and 22 (the baptism). See the pertinent discussion in Dagron 1994, 124–5.
[572] Nikephoros, PmbZ #5267.
[573] This might also be a further clue that Constantine himself took his own illustrious name seriously, as attractively proposed by Magdalino 2007a.
[574] McCormick 1986, 136.
[575] *ACO*, 780.21–30, tr. Price 2018, 539.

According to this testimony, Constantine V took care of propagating his triumphs through images,[576] which were well-known to everyone in 787. Although none of these images has survived – at least none has been attributed to Constantine or any other iconoclast emperor – we may have an example in the famous *Khludov Psalter* created in Constantinople very soon after the second termination of Iconoclasm in 843.[577] Auzépy hypothesised that this famous psalter in fact had an iconoclast one as its model, specifically for those images assessed by Corrigan as pre-iconoclastic, featuring Old Testament figures like the king and prophet David, represented as a Byzantine emperor.[578] Auzépy further argues that the representation of St Constantine the Great (fol. 58v, fig. 19) was originally employed for emperor Constantine V.[579] The image is unmistakeably one of imperial triumph. The emperor's horse tramples the enemy below, while the emperor pierces the same enemy with a lance. The horse's equipment also signifies a triumphal context, with the saddle and the double straps ornamented with pearls, and the plume on the horse's forehead. The image resembles the emperor on the *Barberini Ivory* (compare figs. 20 and 21), presumably representing Justinian I,[580] only the image of Constantine is a much more dynamic one: consider, for example, the emperor's military tunic harmonized in movement with the horse's tail, or emperor's extraordinarily lush hair, which is a highly unusual feature.[581] The image illustrates the Psalm 59[60]:6: 'You have given a sign to those that fear you, so that they might flee from the bow'.[582] Combined with the symbol of the cross on top of the emperor's lance, it announces that, as a God-fearing ruler, Constantine triumphs with God's help. The image acclaiming imperial triumph over barbarians both protected and aided by the power of the cross would certainly fit the imperial ideology pursued under emperor Constantine V and his father Leo. The proposition remains hypothetical, but it would appear more likely if we factor in that Constantine V advertised himself as the 'New Constantine', and may have taken this role very seriously, as argued by Magdalino.[583] In this regard, it is worth noting that the image in *Khludov* agrees in several details with the image that Constantine the Great had erected on a high panel above the entrance to the palace, according to Eusebius. The image is said to have depicted the emperor with the sign of the cross above his head, his sons at his side, and a dragon trampled and speared under his and his

[576] Moreover, the patriarch Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos I*, PG 100, 276 B, alludes that Emperor Constantine had his portrait depicted in many places. For the discussion of these lines, see Auzépy 1998a.
[577] *Khludov Psalter*, images reproduced in Ščepkina, 1977. The standard treatment is Corrigan 1992.
[578] Auzépy 2003, esp. 16–7.
[579] Ibid., 19–20.
[580] Ibid., 20, n. 49.
[581] I am grateful to Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, Kathleen Corrigan, and Shannon Steiner, for their help in analysing this image.
[582] *Khludov Psalter*, 58v, ἔδωκας τοῖς φοβουμένοις σε σημείωσιν τοῦ φυγεῖν ἀπὸ προσώπου τόξου.
[583] Magdalino 2007a.

sons' feet.[584] Although no images have survived, we have textual evidence that Constantine V was also portrayed slaying a dragon, the only Byzantine emperor to be accorded this feat apart from Constantine the Great.[585]

Besides imagery, we have further traces that the ceremonial of triumph, and some aspects of organizing a campaign relevant for the following heading, has been written down in some form at the time of Constantine V, evidence of which is found in the works compiled under Constantine VII *Porphyrogennetos*. It is well-established that the chapters on the investiture of a *Kaisar* and the *Nobelisimii* in *De Cerimoniis* are based on the promotion of Constantine V's sons.[586] The second clue was established by Mango and Sevčenko, based on the inscription commemorating the repair of a bridge in Thrace:

> Ανεκενισθη ει γεφ[υρ]α αυτη επι Κωνσταντ (ινου) κ(αι) Λεοντος των αιωνιων αυγουστων κοσμωσυ[σ]τα(των) δεσπ(οτων) κ(αι) θ(ε)ωκυβερν[ητ(ων)] μεγαλων βασιλεων ημων κ(αι) Χριστοφορου κ(αι) Νι[κ]ηφορου των ευτυχες[τ]ατ(ων) [εις] αιονια ετη καισα[ρ(ων)] συν Νικιτα τω επιφανεσ[τ]ατω νοβελισιμω κ(αι) Ἀνθ[ι] μω τω …..
>
> This bridge was repaired under Constantine and Leo the eternal Augusti, Lords Upholders of the Universe and our Great Emperors guided by God; and <under> Christophorus and Nicephorus the most fortunate Caesars for all years to come [?], together with Nicetas, the most illustrious Nobilissimus and Anth[i]mus, the …[587]

In their analysis of the inscription, Mango and Sevčenko note the exceptionally rare appellations employed for Constantine (V) and his heir Leo (IV): κοσμοσυστάτων and θεοκυβερνήτων.[588] They identify as the only parallels several other chapters of *De Cerimoniis*, notably, in each case pertaining to a triumph:

- I, ch. 77, 'The cheers recited by the army when the sovereign celebrates victories over the enemy, or when provisions or some other imperial distribution have been given to the army'.[589]

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[584] *VC*, III, §3, 82.1–19, tr. Cameron and Hall, 122, and 256 (commentary).
[585] See the detailed treatment of this motif in the last section of this chapter.
[586] De Cer., I, ch. 43 (first half), and ch. 44. See Mango and Ševčenko 1972, 390, n. 26, and Moffatt and Tall 2012, 217, n. 2. The event is described in Nikephoros §87, and Theophanes, 443–4.
[587] Text and tr., Mango and Ševčenko 1972, 385.1–10.
[588] Mango and Ševčenko 1972, 388, propose to translate κοσμοσύστατος as 'the one who restore universe, makes it into one, holds it together'.
[589] De Cer., I, 77, 372–3, tr. Moffatt and Tall, 372.

- II, ch. 19, 'When a triumph is held in the Forum of Constantine'.[590]
- II, ch. 43, 'Cheers raised by an army when victory celebrations and triumphs are held'.[591]

This identification strongly suggests that at least the acclamations were recorded under Emperor Constantine V and his heir, and were still available in the second half of the tenth century. We do have at least one more instance of the rare appellation from the end of the ninth century, which may be a trace of a text created under Constantine V. In his treatise against the Manicheans/Paulicians, Peter of Sicily is praising the then ruling emperor Basil I (r. 867-886) and his sons Constantine and Leo for triumphing over heresy.[592] Peter uses the similar combination of epithets: τὴν δικαίαν βασιλείαν τῶν κοσμοσυστάτων καὶ ἁγίων μεγάλων βασιλέων ἡμῶν ('the just reign of our holy and great *kosmosustaton* emperors'),[593] and concludes the same paragraph hailing the memory of Basil's noble exploits that will live through the ages, ἅμα τῶν θεοστέπτων υἱῶν καὶ μεγάλων βασιλέων ἡμῶν Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Λέοντος τῶν αἰωνίων αὐγούστων ('as well as [that] of the god-crowned sons of his, Constantine and Leo, our great emperors of eternal memory').[594] Moreover, we know that Peter had access in some form to the *Ekloge*,[595] and one of its appendices; a few paragraphs later he writes that:

> Our most divine and orthodox emperors, the true Christians, count among their noblest merits to enact that the Manichaeans and Montanists will be punished by the sword; if their books are discovered, they will be delivered to the fire, and if someone is discovered to hide them, he will be liable to death penalty and his property will be confiscated for the benefit of the public treasury.[596]

The line on the capital punishment is identical to the stipulation in the *Ekloge* (XVII.52: Οἱ μανιχαῖοι καὶ οἱ μοντανοὶ ξίφει τιμωρείσθωσαν[597]) and the remaining measures, although without literal correspondences, agree with punishments prescribed in the *Appendix Ekloge* (III.3 and III.7).[598] According to the most recent study on the *Ekloge* by Humphreys, the appendix was most likely published under the emperor Constantine V, probably in the context of the Iconoclast council in 754.[599] Such context would be fitting

[590] De Cer., I, 77, 607–12, tr. Moffatt and Tall, 607.
[591] De Cer., I, 77, 649–51, tr. Moffatt and Tall, 649.
[592] Peter of Sicily, *The History of Manicheans*, §89–92, 38–41. Basil I, PmbZ #20837.
[593] Ibid., §91, 39.29. I leave the epithet *kosmosustaton* untranslated as its meaning is not crucial for the present purpose.
[594] Ibid., §91, 41.1–2.
[595] Ibid., 40, n. 51.
[596] Ibid., §98, 41.34–42.2.
[597] *Ekloge*, 17.52.
[598] *Appendix Ekloge*, III, 3.14–9 (stipulation on confiscation of property), and III, 7.37–47 (stipulations for hiding Manicheans and for burning of books).
[599] Humphreys 2015, 131–52, esp, 149–50.

for a text that praised the emperors Constantine and Leo for their triumph against heresy, and this is the context in which the exceptionally rare epithet κοσμοσύστατος appears in Peter's treatise. Accordingly, it may be suspected that he had some kind of Isaurian material as his template. If the conjecture is accepted, it is worth considering whether the enduring association of Constantine V with triumph played some role in this choice?

Military organization

The creation of the *Tagmata*

When it comes to military organization, arguably the most important measure under Constantine V was the creation of the powerful palatine army regiments, the *tagmata*. These units account for at least some of his military success, these were the major 'tool' of enforcing Constantine's policies and authority in Constantinople, and its members became important agents in proliferating and propagating Constantine's memory up to the early ninth century.[600]

The creation of the new unit was based on the two palatine guard units, the *Scholae* and the *Excubitores*, which were reformed and expanded by carefully chosen men, loyal to the emperor. [601] The regiment was a well-trained professional army unit stationed in the capital, and the state provided the allowances and accommodation.[602] Importantly, the members of this highly privileged elite force have been integrated with the demes,[603] and became notorious for their role in public humiliations and executions of emperor's opponents – for which they were targeted by iconophile writers[604] – and remained among the most enthusiastic and vocal supporters of Constantine V's memory and iconoclast policy for some time after his reign.[605] When the empress Eirene and her associates began the campaign to reverse iconoclast religious policy, the soldiers of the tagmata were the first to voice opposition, and the main force behind the interruption of the council in the Church of the Holy Apostles in 786. Writing in c. 809, Stephen the Deacon claimed that the surviving members of the tagmata regiment, even in their seventies, continued to shave their beard close to the skin, following Constantine V's orders.[606] In

[600] The standard treatment is Haldon 1984, esp. 228–35, 266–70, 344–6. See also Kaegi 1981, 238–9, for a slightly different opinion on the dating of the creation of the tagmata, and Magdalino 2007a, 12–13, 20.
[601] Haldon 1984, 228–35.
[602] Ibid., 228–9. Accommodation was secured probably by repurposing some of the dilapidated buildings in the capital, Magdalino 2007a, 12–13.
[603] Haldon 1984, 266–70. Magdalino 2007a, 13, n. 60.
[604] Haldon 1984, 233–4. For some examples of hostility against the soldiers of the *tagmata*, see *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §38; Theophanes, 461–2; *Life of Tarasios*, §26; Nikephoros, *Apologeticus*, 556 A; Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 501 B.
[605] Haldon 1984, 233, concludes that 'the tagmata kept the capital firmly iconoclastic'.
[606] Life of St Stephen the Younger, §38.

the early ninth century when the 'Bulgarian threat' reached its peak, the dismissed members of the *tagmata* were involved in an attempt to bring one of Constantine V's surviving blind sons to the throne, and later performed a supplication on the emperor's tomb in the Church of the Holy Apostles.[607] Haldon acknowledged the relevance of the unit's special political role for the group identity,[608] and, if true, the story about the beards, which were an important identity marker,[609] suggests that group identity was maintained and indeed tied to its origins and the emperor who created the regiment. Haldon further argued that the older soldiers probably retold the stories to new recruits, drawing the attention to the scene in a military camp from the *Life of Cosmas and John* in which two soldiers, Maximos and Florentios, lament the current state of affairs and reminisce the time of emperor Constantine V: 'Where is now that mightiest [κράτιστος] Constantine – hinting at Kopronymos – the glorious, the one admired among emperors?'[610] Haldon suggests that although the text is later, it probably refers back to the older tradition, possibly describing the period during Constantine VI's reign, when the Byzantine military record plummeted.[611] Thus, the members of the tagmata remained important agents of maintaining positive memory of emperor Constantine V, also giving it political vitality.

Organizing imperial campaigns

The positive inheritance from the Isaurians concerning military matters is related surprisingly explicitly in the so-called *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions* composed under Constantine VII, possibly by the emperor himself. In the introduction to the work, the author stresses that:

> This tradition [i.e. the procedure for imperial expeditions] clearly having been handed down to them [i.e. Emperor Michael III and Kaisar Bardas] from the preceding emperors, that is to say Theophilos and Michael [II] […] such a tradition came down to them in the same way from earlier emperors. By 'earlier', I mean those Isaurians who fell into the gravest error with regard to the Orthodox faith; I do not mean by 'earlier' the great and famed and holy Constantine, nor Constantius his son, nor the most impious Julian, nor even Theodosius the Great and those who came after him.[612]

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[607] See the detailed treatment of these events in Ch. 3, *The 'Bulgarian crisis' (811–813) and pro-Constantine V incidents in Constantinople*.
[608] Haldon 1984, 344–5.
[609] Unfortunately, there are very few studies devoted to the beards in Byzantium, see the comments in Tougher 2013, 153.
[610] *The Life of St Comsas and John*, 294.2–4, ποῦ νῦν ἐστιν ὁ κράτιστος ἐκεῖνος Κωνσταντῖνος – τὸν Κοπρώνυμον παραδηλοῦντες – ὁ περίδοξος, ὁ περίβλεπτος ἐν βασιλεῦσιν. The narrative continues, ibid., 294.10–12, with Cosmas admonishing the soldiers for praising the 'lawless tyrant, the impious Caballinos'. See further comments by Haldon 1984, 233, n. 601.
[611] Haldon 1984, 345, n. 1050.
[612] *Three Treatises*, 96.40–53, tr. Haldon 97, commentary at 182–3. See also, Ibid., Introduction, 41–2, the discussion of two different versions of the text, one of which does not feature the Isaurians.

This is a unique and important testimony confirming, as Haldon notes, that Constantine VII had access to the eighth-century material.[613] It is also an example of the historical memory of the Isaurians as *the* Iconoclasts, as they alone are marked as 'falling into gravest error concerning Orthodox faith,' even though they were not the only rulers mentioned in this passage that had embraced Iconoclasm.[614] Haldon also notes that it is unclear where is this testimony coming from, and whether it was a written or oral tradition.[615] There is an interesting detail in Nikephoros' *Third Antirrhetikos* that may hint at a memory present in the early ninth century of a (formal?) counselling on military matters under the emperor Constantine V.[616] In his effort to undermine the memory of Constantine V's *andreia*, Nikephoros claims that emperor publicly admitted that he was afraid of the Arabs; specifically, he writes that:

> 'he [Constantine] had been very much afraid of the barbarians from the East, even as a memory; so much so that he had publicly declared in an assembly that he never had the courage to face in battle even a small number of them, accompanied by all his troops'.[617]

Nikephoros' style is classicizing, so it is hard to say what kind of assembly is meant by ἐκκλησία, and what does ὁπλιτικός refer to, infantry or, more likely, generally the troops. Nevertheless, this sounds to me like a rather specific reference, and I would interpret it as Nikephoros' distortion of the original account, whether it was an oral or written tradition. This could have been a public or semi-public assembly in which Constantine V was conferring with his generals on tactics and strategy fighting the Arabs, and that, perhaps in specific circumstances which Nikephoros omits, the emperor suggested it would be unwise to face the Arabs, even with a great number of troops. Moreover, there need not to have been even a specific situation, considering that the strategy of avoiding facing the Arabs in the open field was adopted early by Constantine's father Leo, and the battle at Akroinon in 740 was a rare exception in this regard.[618] Remembering that Constantine V was the son of a successful general-emperor and a campaigning emperor himself, a war council is quite likely in any case.

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[613] *Three Treatises*, 182.
[614] Michael III's father Theophilos and his father, Michael II, were both Iconoclasts, *Three Treatises*, 96.43–4.
[615] *Three Treatises*, 182.
[616] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 508 C.
[617] Ibid., 508 C, τοὺς δὲ πρὸς ἥλιον ἀνίσχοντα βαρβάρους καὶ εἰς μνήμην ἰόντας ἐδεδίει μάλιστα · ὡς καὶ ἐπ' ἐκκλησίας κηρύσσειν, μὴ θαρρεῖν κατ' ὀλίγους αὐτῶν, τῷ ὑπ' αὐτῷ ἅμα παντὶ ὁπλιτικῷ, εἰς ταυτὸν μάχης ἰέναι πώποτε.
[618] Howard-Johnston 2010, 511–12. More detailed treatment in Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 723–71.

Further information concerning Constantine V's role in military organization can be inferred from his campaigns against the Bulgarians, which entailed careful preparations and coordinated movement of the land forces and the navy. For the 763 campaign, for example, both Nikephoros and Theophanes record the construction of 'up to 800 horse-carrying ships', as this alone was an achievement[619] – Pryor and Jeffreys note that this is the earliest surviving Byzantine reference for the use of horse transport.[620] Another campaign in 772 was apparently even more ambitious, involving 2000 *chelandia* according to Theophanes, with the emperor boarding the 'red *chelandia*', suggesting that imperial barge at the time was a horse-transporting ship.[621] For the campaign in 773, when Constantine V achieved the last great victory and celebrated the second triumph, the emperor supposedly levied the majority of the armies at his disposal; Theophanes records a number of 80 000 men which is considered an exaggeration, but it does give an idea that the campaign was considered and remembered as a massive undertaking.[622] The scale of the campaign seems to be reflected in minting activity, which increased steadily during Constantine's reign, and peaked in the last couple of years of his rule according to Füeg's assessment of number of dies based on a sample of approximately one thousand *nomismata* specimens observed.[623] Finally, Theophanes also preserves praise of the emperor's skill in organizing this expedition, utilizing his spy network, and employing clever stratagems to gain advantage over the enemy:

> So as not to make it known that he was setting out against Bulgaria (seeing that emissaries of the lord of Bulgaria had come to him and were still in the City), he [Constantine] pretended to be undertaking an expedition against the Arabs and sent the standards and the imperial retinue across the Bosporus. When he had dismissed the emissaries and been informed by his spies of their departure, he raised his army and set out in all haste. […] He marched to a place called Lithosoria and, without sounding the bugles, fell upon the Bulgarians, whom he routed in a great victory.[624]

The evidence suggests that Constantine V was to a degree at least personally involved in preparations and planning of campaigns and it is quite natural to expect that

[619] Nikephoros, §73. Theophanes, 432–3, tr. Mango and Scott, 599, adds that each ship carried 12 horses (=9 600 in total). Both historians seem to rely on the same source, probably some kind of official document, although they use different expressions for the horse-carrying ships – *hipagogoi* in Nikephoros, *chelandia* in Theophanes. On the horse-transport in Byzantium, see Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 304–33.
[620] Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 307.
[621] Theophanes, 446–7, tr. Mango and Scott, 616–17, and n. 2. In the scene of Constantine's death, Theophanes, 448, tr. Mango and Scott, 619, says that the emperor 'died on board his *chelandion*'. For the discussion of the origin and meaning of the term χελάνδια, see Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 167.
[622] Theophanes, 447. The number may have represented the nominal total number of available men across the empire, Haldon 1999, 101–2. It may be added that Mango and Ševčenko 1972, 391, considered preparations for this campaign as the most likely date for the repair of the bridge commemorated in the inscription.
[623] See Füeg 2007, table 4.1, p. 166–7, for statistics of number of coins/dies observed, ibid., figure 4, p. 170–1, for the graph, and ibid., 154–65, for the calculation method of the 'Probable Average Number of Dies used per Year'.
[624] Theophanes, 447, tr. Mango and Scott, 617. Testimonies portraying Constantine V as cunning are numerous and appear in diverse sources and contexts, not just in military matters, see below, 144-5.

he conferred with his generals. If there was any incentive for the emperor to put together a treatise on military matters, whether to write it personally, or commission someone else to do it, I think all the necessary conditions were in place. With the testimony from the 'Three Treatises' and line from Nikephoros' polemic in mind, it seems likely that Constantine had considerable role in handing down the 'tradition' for imperial campaigns to future emperors which certainly added to his prestige as an imperial model.

Deeds of peace: Purging idolatry, imperial justice, and the slaying of a dragon

'Religious zeal': Triumph over idolatry and establishing imperial orthodoxy

Similarly to his father Leo, Constantine V was prompted to action concerning religious policy by the threat of divine punishment that manifested itself in a series of calamities occurring in the first years of his reign.[625] On 26 October 740, one of the most devastating earthquakes in Constantinople's history struck the city.[626] While the aftershocks were still felt (going for a full year according to Theophanes), the civil war with Artabasdos (741–3) broke out, and Constantine's blockade induced hunger inside the capital.[627] The most devastating, however, was the plague, which spread across the empire in mid 740s and reached Constantinople in 746, decimating the population over one year.[628] Finally, during this period, a series of disturbing omens occurred in the sky.[629] Put together, these were almost carbon copies of the signs of the apocalypse prophesied in the scriptures; the aforementioned *Apocalypse of Daniel* opens with: '[a]ccording to the God-spoken word which says: *When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes, plagues and deviation of stars.*'[630] The devastation coupled with unmistakeable signs of divine wrath and doom would have challenged Constantine's legitimacy, pressuring the emperor to

[625] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 189ff., emphasize the effects of the plague, which was certainly devastating, but I think it is worth looking at the whole 740–47 period.
[626] Theophanes, 412, tr. Mango and Scott, 572. The liturgical commemoration of this earthquake is recorded in the typicon of Hagia Sophia, *Typicon*, I, 78.18–20. See also Ambraseys 2009, 227–9.
[627] Nikeporos, §64–6. Theophanes, 414–21. Nikephoros *Antirrthetikos III*, 500 B–501 A. *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, ed. G. Waitz, 423.10–16.
[628] Nikephoros, §67. Theophanes, 423–4; tr. Mango and Scott, 585–6. See Turner 1990a, for the impact of the plague, and more recently Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 182, n. 129 with further references. In his later work, Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 496 B, notes that the emperor in fact escaped to Nikomedia maintaining contact with the city via letter-exchange.
[629] Probably a sort of meteor shower, and at least one eclipse. Thepohanes, 416, 418, tr. Mango and Scott, 577, 579, gives only brief accounts, but the oriental sources, presumably largely deriving from the lost work of Thepohilos of Edessa, are more detailed, see Hoyland 2011, 242–4. For a 'disturbance of stars' occurring in 750, see Nikephoros, §71, and Mango's commentary at ibid., 218.
[630] *Daniel Apocalypse*, §1; tr. Zervos, 763. The quote is a combination of Mk 13:7–8 and Lk 21:10–11.

provide an explanation or, rather, to find the cause and thus, the 'cure' for avoiding further punishment from God. Moreover, such situation could have been (ab)used by political opponents to delegitimize Constantine.[631]

In Nikephoros' polemics against Constantine V, there might be a trace that somebody on behalf of the emperor tried to explain away at least one of the portents as a naturally occurring phenomenon. In a long section devoted to all the disasters that had befell the empire during Constantine's reign, Nikephoros puts much effort in demonstrating that all were in fact signs of divine wrath, caused by Constantine's Iconoclasm.[632] After mentioning the signs in the sky, Nikephoros writes:

> Let no one here claim, concerning the prodigies of that time, that meteors were only vaporous smoke, or thick clouds whose earthly atmosphere was saturated, and then evaporate in the ether, and which moving under the effect of the heat, constituted what are called shooting stars, flames, masses of fire of comets incandescent trajectories, and all these forms which are manifested naturally.[633]

Nikephoros then puts together a long string of Biblical examples of divine wrath,[634] and concludes that 'all this is accomplished outside of any natural consecration'.[635] The explanation that Nikephoros refutes comes from Aristotle's *Meteorology*,[636] which implies that both Nikephoros, and likely his addressee, were aware of the text. More importantly, it suggests that this, more 'natural', explanation was circulating at least in the early ninth century, and probably earlier; one cannot prove that such an explanation was advanced already at the time of Constantine V, but we do have several traces that the emperor was interested in astronomy, as Magdalino noted.[637] The famous manuscript Vaticanus graecus 1291, containing Ptolemy's *Handy Tables* is dated to Constantine V's reign (753/4?),[638] and the text relating the foundation of the *Hodegoi* monastery portraits the emperor in distress after a clock in the palace stopped working.[639]

It was, therefore, in response to a series of disasters which challenged Constantine's legitimacy, that the emperor recognized idolatry as the main cause of divine wrath – following the policy of his father – and initiated a campaign to purge it from the empire by convening a church council that was propagated as an ecumenical one. Summoning an

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[631] This was exactly what Nikephoros did in the early ninth century, Nikephoros, *Antirrthetikos III*, 496 A–501 A.
[632] Nikephoros, *Antirrthetikos III*, 496 A–501 A.
[633] Ibid., 497 B.
[634] Ibid., 497 B–D.
[635] Ibid., 500 A.
[636] Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, I.4., 28–34.
[637] Magdalino 2007a, 14.
[638] For the dating, see Wright 1985; Ševčenko 1992, 281, n. 7; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 220–4; and especially Anderson 2017, 114–26. Janz 2003, attempted to re-date the manuscript to the early ninth century, but his study is far too limited in scope and his hypothesis is unconvincing.
[639] Angelidi 1994, 140–3.

ecumenical council was the only legitimate way of introducing dogmatic changes,[640] but it was also a principal act in establishing an emperor as orthodox, associated with the most celebrated rulers in empire's 'Christian history', hailing back to the example of the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great.[641]

It may not be a coincidence that the campaign for convening the council began not long after successful campaigns against the Arabs. Constantine began writing and delivering theological tracts – the so-called *Questions* (πεύσεις), composed in the traditional question and answer format (*erotapokriseis*) – which challenged the production and veneration of holy images, focusing specifically on the image of Christ.[642] In the first *peusis*, Constantine laid down the main theological argument against the representation of Christ in an image based on the accepted Chalcedonian theology that Christ is 'acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division or separation'.[643] Constantine argued that if Christ was represented in an image, it was only his human nature that was represented as the divine nature is not circumscribable; in this case, the two natures would be separated, which was against accepted theology.[644] Constantine's arguments have been assessed as somewhat naïve, awkwardly expressed, but fresh and original, all aspects speaking in favor of Constantine's authorship.[645] Scholars have proposed that the primary audience for the *Questions* were the churchmen of the capital,[646] but a broader campaign should not be excluded considering that the decisions of the council of Hiereia were publicly proclaimed at the Forum of Constantine, and emperor Constantine V's overall reliance on popular support throughout his reign. Moreover, we hear that the emperor personally led the campaign in the capital, successfully preaching and persuading in public:

> In this year the impious Constantine, puffed in his spirit and making many plans against the Church and the orthodox faith, held audiences every day[647] and

[640] It is worth remembering Patriarch Germanos' response to Leo's pressure for changing the religious policy, Nikephoros, §62, tr. Mango, 131, 'without an ecumenical synod I cannot make a written declaration of faith'. Similar in Theophanes, 409.
[641] See the overview in Dvornik 1963, 9–46.
[642] The *Peuseis* are preserved through the refutations of the patriarch Nikephoros in his three *Antirrhetikoi*, PG 100, 205–553. The still standard edition of the *Peuseis* only is Ostrogorsky 1929, 8–11. See further Gero 1977, 37–52, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 179ff. The monk Theosteriktos, writing in c. 840, *Life of Niketas of Medikios*, §29, xxiv, claimed that he read thirteen works of the emperor that had been published in two weeks, which Theosteriktos denounces as λογίδρια = a 'contemptible little pamphlet', Lampe, s.v. '*λογίδριον'. Although we cannot be certain, Constantine's authorship is generally accepted: Ostrogorsky 1929, 12–13; Gero 1977, 37–9. On the *erotapokriseis*, see Efthymiadis 2017.
[643] *Acts of Chalcedon*, V.34, tr. Price and Gaddis, 204.
[644] Ostrogorsky 1929, 8–9, (summary) 11–2. See also Gero 1977, 39–45.
[645] Ostrogorsky 1929, 11–17, Gero 1977, 37–45. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 180.
[646] Based on fragments 23 and 24 in Ostrogorsky 1929, 14-15, Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 180. Ostrogorsky 1929, 15, adds that Constantine's tract was probably appended to the invitation to the council sent to the bishops across the empire, attested in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §26.
[647] Based on an alternative wording attested in some manuscripts, it has been proposed that the reading here should be 'in every city' instead every day, Gero 1977, 24, n. 58, with literature. Mango and Scott 1997, 591, n. 1, rejected this proposal.

> treacherously urged the people to follow his designs, thus paving the way to the complete impiety that was later to overtake him.[648]

The proposed 'naivety' of Constantine's theological argument may have had the advantage of easily communicating the theological issue to the citizens of Constantinople, although the message for this purpose may have been framed differently, perhaps already presenting icon-veneration as tantamount to idolatry, and urging the need to put a ban on the practice for the sake of salvation. As Humphreys proposed,[649] it is possible that the emperor and his advisers backed up their campaign by expanding the imperial law, the *Ekloge*, with the section (AE.III) that dedicates much space to heretics and pagans of all sorts, and prescribes a capital punishment for public worship of idols.[650] As I will argue, the comparison between certain passages from the surviving *Horos* (i.e. the definition) of the council in Hiereia and the *Ekloge*, further strengthens Humphreys' proposal, although it is equally likely that AE.III was promulgated *after* the council.

The campaign was evidently successful; between 10 February and 8 August 754, the council was held in the imperial palace of Hiereia with the participation of 338 bishops, which declared a ban on icon production and veneration official religious policy of the empire. [651] Patriarch Anastasios had died shortly before the council met, which perhaps made it easier for Constantine to control the proceedings if there was a need for it, however, the scholars have pointed out that a long period of the council (six months) suggests that it was at least far less controlled and 'scripted' than Nikaia II (787), which lasted mere nineteen days (24 September–13 October).[652] In any case, this allowed the emperor to choose a new patriarch in the concluding session of the council.[653] From the surviving *Horos*,[654] it is clear that the assembly followed the main arguments prescribed in Constantine's *Peuseis*. However, it was reworked and placed on safer theological

[648] Theophanes, 427, tr. Mango and Scott, 591.
[649] Humphreys 2015, 149–50.
[650] *Appendix Ekloge*, III.17.95–6.
[651] For the testimony of Byzantine chroniclers on the council in Hiereia, see Nikephoros, §72, and Theophanes, 427–8. See also a few details in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §26, and §29. For testimonies in the oriental sources, see Theophilus of Edessa, tr. Hoyland 2011, 292–3, n. 896 with references, and Gero 1977, 179–85. The council has been studied extensively, see for example Gero 1977, 53–110; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 189–97, and most recently, Price 2018, 1–76, with further literature.
[652] Gero 1977, 61–3. Price 2018, 26–7, comments that 'the contrast […] could not be greater'.
[653] Nikephoros, §72. Theophanes, 427. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 191.
[654] The *Horos* of the council of Hiereia has survived in the acts of the 787 council in Nikaia, like Constantine's *Peuseis*, for the purpose of refutation. The latest edition of the acts of Nikaia II is *ACO*, ser. sec., III.1–3, ed. Lamberz, 2008, 2012, 2016. The latest edition of the *Horos* only, with German translation, is Krannich et al. 2002, 30–69. An English translation of the *Horos* is provided by Gero 1977, 68–94.

grounds with improved formulation to better conform to the accepted normative theology.[655] The *Horos* grounded itself firmly in the tradition of the first six ecumenical councils,[656] and a parallel can be drawn with AE.III; in addition to the catalogue of heretics and pagans, the list of heretics from the Nikaia I council is appended as the final entry of AE.III.[657] More importantly, the main ideological statement concerning the emperor's role in the regulation of the right faith found in the *Horos* seems to be taken from the proem of the *Ekloge*. In the *Horos*, it is first established that the devil 'emptied out against man his whole wickedness and by deception caused him to become estranged from the glory and splendor of God, enjoining the worship of creation rather than of the Creator [Rom 1.25]'.[658] It is then stated that 'for this reason God, fashioner [of man], not tolerating that the work of His own hand should be utterly destroyed, made provision for his salvation *by means of the Law and the prophets*'.[659] A few paragraphs later, we find a parallel entry which introduces the emperors. After reiterating that the devil, through 'wicked designs', managed, 'in the guise of Christianity' to secretly bring back idolatry, persuading people 'not to relinquish but to worship that which is created',[660] it is stated that:

> For which reason, just as formerly Jesus, the leader and perfecter of our salvation sent out His all-wise disciples and apostles to all places, with the power of the all-hallowed Spirit, for the purpose of the destruction of these [idols?], thus even now, He raised up our faithful emperors, His servants and equal to the apostles, made wise by the power of the same Spirit, for our discipline and instruction, for the destruction of demonic fortifications of diabolical craft and deceit.[661]

We find a very similar construction and thematic parallel in the *Ekloge*. The first paragraph of the proem proper begins by introducing the law as a means of salvation:

> Our God, the Lord and Maker of all things, who made man and bestowed on him free will, who according to what the Prophets said, 'gave the Law to help' him (Is. 8:20), and through it made known to him everything that should be done and what should be refrained from, so that he might chose the one as it brings Salvation, and spurn the other as the cause of chastisement...[662]

The next paragraph introduces the emperor's role in the correct application of the law, imbuing the emperors with Apostolic authority:

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[655] Ostrogorsky 1929, 16–17. Gero 1977, 96–7.
[656] *ACO*, 638.12–23, 640.1–8, 640.19–642.2, 642.20–7, 644.1–6. Gero 1977, 95, terms it 'intense traditionalism'. On tradition as 'weapon' in iconoclast controversy, see Auzépy 2004a.
[657] *Appendix Ekloge*, III.17.104–8.
[658] *ACO*, 612.17–21; tr. Gero 1977, 69.
[659] *ACO*, II, 614.1–6; tr. Gero 1977, 69 [my italics I.M.].
[660] *ACO*, II, 624.8–14. Gero 1977, 70–1.
[661] *ACO*, II, 630.5–12, tr. Gero 1977, 71. See also Dagron 2003, 190.
[662] *Ekloge*, prooimion, 11–17; tr. Humphreys 2015, 96.

> Since, therefore, having entrusted the rule over the empire to us, as he was well pleased, he, as a proof of our love for him with fear, ordered us, as he ordered Peter, the supreme leader of the apostles, to be shepherds of the most faithful flock. We can think of nothing more important or greater in return than steering 'in judgement and righteousness' (Is. 9:7; III Kings 10:9) those entrusted to us by Him, so that thereby, 'the bonds of all injustice shall be broken, and the knots of violent covenants dissolved' (Is. 58:6), and the assaults of sinners beaten back […][663]

Both the construction and theme in the *Horos* parallel the exposition from the *Ekloge* closely, implying also the same underlying ideology; God, creator of men, provided for salvation 'by means of the Law and the prophets', and He entrusted the emperors with the apostolic authority to regulate lives and morals of their subjects in order to defeat the threat of sin – in this case idolatry – and secure salvation. We find a similar claim in the *Prosphonetikos Logos* of Trullo. Praising the emperor Justinian II, it is said that:

> to you she [wisdom] has entrusted her Church and has taught you to meditate on her law day and night for the correction of the peoples subject to you. […] with the power of your piety and understanding […] you have chosen to lead your flock away from iniquity and corruption.[664]

The major difference between the two texts is first, that the apostolic authority, only hinted at with the shepherd metaphor in Trullo, is assumed much more confidently in the *Ekloge* and the *Horos*; second, the statement in Trullo overall is more rhetorical, there is no immediate danger presented, as the threat of idolatry in the *Horos*. While the ideological construction existed, and perhaps served as an inspiration for the proem of the *Ekloge*,[665] the statement in the *Horos* of Hiereia council, in my opinion, clearly derives from the *Ekloge*.

It is not difficult to see why this claim outraged iconophiles in 787 who protested vehemently,[666] although against the bishops, not against the emperors themselves, since Constantine and Leo were the grandfather and father of the emperor at the time (Constantine VI). The complaint later changed somewhat, and the protest, although again not aiming directly at the emperors, would publicly pronounce the limitation of the imperial role in church-policy making.

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[663] *Ekloge*, prooimion, 21–31. tr. Humphreys 2015, 96–7.
[664] *Trullo*, tr. Featherstone, 50.
[665] See the comments by Humphreys 2015, 76–9, 96–7.
[666] Epiphanios the Deacon opens his retort bombastically, *ACO*, 630.14–17, Engl. tr. Sahas, 65, 'Who has ever spoken an iniquity of this magnitude? What impiety could be worse than this? What a shameless and wicked blasphemy! What a hidden deception and a diverse machination! They speak as if they have been taught this way by the devil himself'.

The second series of statements concerning the emperor's role is found in the concluding section of the *Horos*. Announcing the decisions proper, the apostolic authority is invoked again: 'we deem to speak in accordance with the apostles and indeed we believe that we have the spirit of Christ'[667]. After the decisions had been read, customary acclamations were addressed to the emperors Constantine (V) and his son Leo (IV), and the *augusta*, Constantine's mother Maria.[668] As discussed, it is highly likely that Constantine V's father Leo III was in fact also invoked, stressing continuity and dynastic legitimacy.[669] More interesting is the acclamation of emperor Constantine V as the new Constantine, that is emperor Constantine the Great, the primary imperial model.[670] Magdalino, who proposed that Constantine V embraced his role as the new Constantine' more seriously, contends that 'if this was a formality, they [the bishops] made it less so by praising him as the equal of the apostles who had put an end to idolatry – both statements, which drew heavy criticism from iconophiles, are clear reminiscences of the first Christian emperor'.[671] Indeed the acclamation that Constantine '[had] destroyed all idolatry' prompted passionate criticism from the assembly in 787,[672] and it is worth presenting their response. Epiphanios the deacon begins his retort by saying that

> [h]aving addressed the kings as is the custom […] they speak out with the cunning of devil himself, saying 'You have abolished every idolatry' […]. In their desire to ruin redemptive [σωτηριώδη] word of the dispensation they have delved into every exaggeration of blasphemy.[673]

The opening statement already reveals that 'salvation' was the key term, considered utterly inappropriate to praise the emperors, even indirectly, and Epiphanios makes this point very clear further down. He claims repeatedly that the bishops have accorded the emperors the credit for what was accomplished by Christ:

> For it is He Who, by having consented to become perfect man for the sake of our salvation, has abolished every idolatry […] it is obvious that the prophecy [Zech 13:2] refers to Him and not, as they have said, to the power of emperors […]. The

[667] *ACO*, 756.16–17; tr. Gero 1977, 87–8.
[668] Gero 1977, 93, n. 139.
[669] See above, n. 500.
[670] Such acclamation was employed for the first time during the Council of Chalcedon praising the emperor Marcian as the 'new Constantine', Rapp 2010, 189, n. 49 with references. The comparison with Constantine the Great was noticeably missing under Emperor Justinian I, but was made central under Emperor Herakleios, Magdalino 1994, 3–5. On 'New Constantines' in Byzantium, see Magdalino 1994 *passim*.
[671] Magdalino 2007a, 19.
[672] *ACO*, 778.24–5 (destroying idolatry) and ibid., 778.27–780.30 (iconophile response). Gero 1977, 94. Sahas 1986, 166–8.
[673] *ACO*, 778.27–780.3, προσφωνήσαντες τοῖς βασιλεῦσι τὰ εἰωθοτα […] ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου μευοδείας φθέγγονται εἰπόντεσ "πᾶσαν εἰδωλολατρίαν ὑμεῖς ἐξηφανίσατε" […] τὸν γὰρ σωτηριώδη τῆς οἰκονμίας λόγον λυμᾶναι βουλόμενοι εἰς πᾶσαν βαλσφημίας ὑπερβολὴν κατέδυσαν; tr. Sahas 1986, 167.

> Christians, having taken it from Isaiah the most outspoken one, say loudly: *Not an ambassador, nor a messenger, but the Lord himself saved us.* [Is. 63:9].[674]

Epiphanios concludes that 'immersed in flattery, they have gone astray in their fancies and imagination. Rejecting the praises that it is apt and appropriate to deliver to emperors, they have attributed to them what refers to Christ our God'.[675] In the early ninth century, the author of the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, one of the most important texts in the body of vicious polemics against emperor Constantine V, made the same objection, but he presented the Hiereia assembly as making a more explicit statement that the emperor had brought the salvation to the world with the abolition of idolatry.[676] It may be objected that the iconophile interpretation – that the acclamation implied the emperor's role in salvation – does not necessarily correspond with the intentions, and implicitly ideological position, of whoever was behind the composition of the *Horos* of the Hiereia council. Judging from the *Horos*, the assembly was certainly careful not to present this idea too explicitly, aware of the implications. However, such an interpretation would in fact be in line with the ideology underlying the *Ekloge*, as presented above;[677] moreover, Humphreys demonstrated that salvation is in fact one of the central themes in the Isaurian's legislation, both in the *Ekloge* and its appendices.[678] With the visible influence from the ideology underlying the *Ekloge*, we may also consider the impact of Constantine's father Leo assuming the role of the savior of the city, explored in the first chapter.

Humphreys further concluded that 'the Isaurians chose not to employ canons as a tool of imperial reform',[679] but the evidence presented here suggests the opposite. As Auzépy stressed, the council probably had a disciplinary aspect and issued numerous canons; that is at least the testimony of Agapius.[680] Importantly, the outlined influence from the *Ekloge* on the *Horos* of the Hiereia council is a testimony of an expansion of Isaurian imperial law and its underlying ideology into canon law, regulating subjects' lives and morals, with a promise of protection and salvation. This tendency also implies that the law was employed as the principal tool of rule.

The ideology presented at the *Horos* demonstrates overall dominance of the emperor in the affairs of the church, symbolically highlighted in the scene of the election of the new patriarch during the last session:

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[674] *ACO*, 780.7–14; tr. Sahas 1986, 167. Epiphanios repeats the statement yet again in *ACO*, 780.7-19.
[675] *ACO*, 780.20–3; tr. Price 2018, 539.
[676] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, 128.9–10, σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ κόσμῳ ὅτι σύ, βασιλεῦ, ἐλυτρώσω ἡμας ἐκ τῶν εἰδώλων. See additional examples in Gero 1977, 94, n. 140.
[677] See the conclusions in Humphreys 2015, 105.
[678] Humphreys 2015, 93–105, 112, 128–9, more broadly in conclusions 249 ff.
[679] Humphreys 2015, 85.
[680] Auzépy 2008, 283. *Agapius*, tr. Hoyland 2011, 292, 'they instituted many canons and called this the Seventh Council'.

> On the latter day [i.e. 8 August] the enemies of the Theotokos having come to Blachernai, Constantine [the emperor] ascended the ambo holding the monk Constantine, former bishop of Syllaion, and, after reciting a prayer, said in a loud voice, 'Long live Constantine, the ecumenical patriarch!'[681]

The relevant aspect is not the fact that the emperor elected the patriarch, but that he took it upon himself to appoint the patriarch in a quasi-sacerdotal fashion: by leading the patriarch-to-be by the hand, reciting an – effectively intercessory – prayer and proclaiming the decision from the ambo to what was advertised as the ecumenical council of the church. I think this is another instance of emperor Constantine V's tendency of assuming the role of an emperor and a preacher, and it is instructive to compare it with Emperor Leo VI, often considered as the only preacher-emperor in the middle Byzantine period.[682] Leo VI, too, ascended the ambo (of Hagia Sophia), addressed the assembly, and recited a prayer for his brother Stephen, as he presented him as the new patriarch.[683]

As the final act of announcing the results of the council, the emperor Constantine organised a public proclamation on 27 August; Theophanes reports that

> the emperor went up to the Forum together with the unholy bishop Constantine and the other bishops and they proclaimed their misguided heresy in front of all the people after anathematizing the most holy Germanus, George of Cyprus, and John Damascene of the Golden Stream, son of Mansour, holy men and venerable teachers.[684]

As Magdalino notes, 'leading the patriarch and all the assembled bishops in procession to the Forum of Constantine' was an 'unprecedented step'[685] – by contrast, the proclamation of the Nikaia II council's decisions and definition in Constantinople took place in the more secluded space of the Magnaura hall, in front of carefully selected representatives.[686] We do not know, but it seems likely, that the emperor was acclaimed again, and the Forum of Constantine would have been a fitting venue to repeat the 'New Constantine' praise. Tirnanić expounds that the Forum of Constantine was not only a primary spot for imperial proclamations (among other activities),[687] but also the space 'imbued

[681] Theophanes, 427, tr. Mango and Scott, 591. Nikephoros, §72. Constantine II, PmbZ #3820.
[682] The emperors Constantine the Great, Leo VI, and Manuel II, are the only three emperors whose sermons have survived, Antonopoulou 1997, 41–2, n. 34.
[683] Leo VI, *Homilies*, §22, 299-303. See also de Matons 1973, 198–201 (commentary), and 200–7 (edition with Fr. translation), and Antonopoulou 1997, 245–6.
[684] Theophanes, 428, tr. Mango and Scott, 591–2. Nikephoros, §72, is more concise.
[685] Magdalino 2007a, 15.
[686] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 270–1, with references.
[687] Cameron and Herrin 1984, 219.

with the memory of Arius' punishment', one of the archetypal heretics.[688] She proposes that by excommunicating Patriarch Germanos, John of Damascus, and George of Cyprus at the Forum, Constantine V could have evoked the memory of Constantine the Great and Arius, a model of an emperor triumphing over heresy.[689] It may be added, first, that the *Horos* consciously connects with the first six ecumenical councils (beginning with Nikaia I) and includes the condemnation of Arius,[690] and, second, that the already mentioned *Appendix Ekloge* (AE.III) also includes a list of heretics condemned by the first council of Nikaia in 325.[691] In any case, characterizing the proclamation as triumph seems appropriate. Just like the imperial triumph is accentuated by showing and ritually humiliating a defeated enemy, so was the proclaimed Orthodoxy reinforced by the public condemnation of heretics.[692] Moreover, the atmosphere in the city may well have been appropriately triumphant, if we consider that between the last session of the Hiereia council (8 August) and the proclamation at the Forum (27 August), Emperor Constantine probably led the city in the procession commemorating the salvation from the Arab siege in 718 (15 August). Finally, it should be stressed that the proclamation in the Forum was also a display, or rather a threat, of imperial justice. Especially if we include the *Appendix Ekloge* (AE.III), which may have been published around this time, the announcement could have placed icon-worshipers under the threat of capital punishment, at least in theory. The 'quadruple' anathema of John of Damascus is telling in this regard, as he was charged with treason (in addition to his other charges): '[t]o the insulter of Christ and conspirator against the *basileia*, Mansur, anathema'.[693] According to the *Ekloge*, the charge of treason was treated as a threat to the whole community.[694]

Finally, it is important to stress that the *Horos*, i.e. the definition and decisions of the council of Hiereia in 754 remained valid as official religious policy of the empire until the reversal by Nikaia II council in 787, and it would become official again after the Iconoclast council in 815, lasting until the second and the last termination in 843. Emperor Constantine V's prominent role in leading the campaign for Hiereia, therefore, continued to influence the later generation, and was one of the reasons for the later polemic to focus so heavily on him.

While Constantine V was of course not alone in the pursuit of iconoclast policy, it is clear that he assumed the leading, and a highly public role in establishing Iconoclasm as

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[688] Tirnanić 2010, 58.
[689] Ibid., 50–8.
[690] *ACO*, 638.12–23 (Nicaea I); 650.3–5, and 658.1–2 (condemnation of Arius).
[691] *Appendix Ekloge*, III, 20.104–8.
[692] It is worth noting that the second and final reversal of iconoclast policy in 843 will be celebrated as triumph, with a particularly telling imagery – e.g., of the iconophile patriarch Nikephoros trampling the neck of the last iconoclast patriarch John Grammatikos – which may have been derived from iconoclast models. See Auzépy 2003.
[693] *ACO*, 782.4–7; tr. Sahas 1986, 168; *basileia* is my emendation [I.M.].
[694] *Ekloge*, 17.3, 773–5, Ὁ κατὰ βασιλέως φατριάζων ἢ βουλευόμενος ἢ συνωμοσίας κατ' αὐτοῦ ἢ τῆς πολιτείας τῶν χριστιανῶν ποιῶν, τὸν μὲν τοιοῦτον ἥρμοζε κατὰ τὴν ὥραν θανατοῦσθαι ὡς τὴν τοῦ παντὸς κατάλυσιν μελετήσαντα.

the empire's religious policy: he was possibly the author of the basic theological argument that condemned the production and veneration of icons as idolatrous; he spearheaded the campaign in the capital by preaching to the citizenry in public venues, and led the triumphal procession to the Forum where the council decisions were announced to the citizens, contrary to previous practice. Searching for further insight into imperial ideology, we should consider the implications of the outlined public image and conduct of Emperor Constantine V. By taking the role of a preacher in public, Constantine implicitly also assumed the role of a teacher, that is, interpreter of divine Logos and we do have some evidence in support. First, in the proem of the *Ekloge*, the imperial law is acknowledged as divine in origin, and the emperor as its chief arbiter;[695] moreover, as Humphreys demonstrated, the text of the *Ekloge* expressed a link between law and wisdom, and adopted King Solomon as the primary model of a wise and just ruler.[696] Most direct evidence comes from the so-called *Nouthesia Gerontos* ('Admonition of an Old Man Concerning the Holy Icons' title in full), an early anti-iconoclast polemic, in which a certain Cosmas (representing the iconoclast position) states, referring to the council of Hiereia, that 'our pious emperor [i.e. Constantine V], great among emperors, *knowing the will of God*, ordained as follows' [my italics I.M.].[697] Finally, anti-Iconoclast polemicists of the early ninth century singled out emperor Constantine V as the main ideologue and identify him as 'teacher' of Iconoclasm; Nikephoros often refers to Constantine as 'your teacher' when addressing iconoclasts,[698] and recounts how the emperor instructed the soldiers of the tagmata with iconoclast doctrine.[699] Comparison with Emperor Leo VI may be instructive again. Antonopoulou concluded that Leo VI embraced the ideology of the emperor as a teacher in his homiletic œuvre,[700] and argued that he followed the example of Constantine the Great in this, but it is worth considering whether emperor Constantine V had offered a more recent example for Leo? Further, besides the figure of King Solomon, as a wise ruler and law-giver, Constantine V may have also embraced King David, as the model of a ruler and especially a *prophet*. First, the emphasis on the role of the prophets is a recurring theme in the Isaurian ideology, going back to Leo III. The importance of the prophets is often invoked in the letter of Leo to 'Umar, stressing that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets and David the psalmist, transmitting

[695] *Ekloge*, prooimion, 21–31.
[696] Humphreys 2015, 97–105.
[697] *Nouthesia Gerontos*, xxiv, διὸ γνοὺς τὸ θέλμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ πιστὸς καὶ μέγας ἐν βασιλεῦσι βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν διετάξατο οὕτως, tr. Alexander 1977, 238.
[698] Nikephoros, *Refutatio et Eversio*, §21 (more broadly); most directly at §33.13, ὁ ὑμέτερος διδάσκαλος Μαμωνᾶς, similarly at §35.20–3, and §75.63. See also id., *Antirrhetikos III*, 525 A, 'Where do you see the teaching of your master?' George the Monk, 338.18-339.1 (=Coisl. 305, fol. 154r.15–20), defends the virtues of monastic living against those 'following their God-hated spiritual teacher Kopronymos'.
[699] Nikephoros, *Apologeticus maior*, 556 A–C.
[700] Antonopoulou 1997, 76–80.

God's commands.[701] The divinity of Christ and salvific power of the cross proclaimed in the monument in front of the Chalke gate were reinforced through the images and statements of the apostles and the prophets.[702] As analysed above, the proem of the *Ekloge*, proclaims in the opening statement that the Law was divinely-ordained, announced through the words of the Prophet Isaiah that the Lord 'gave law to help' (Is. 8:20),[703] and the *Horos* of Hiereia proclaimed similarly that God 'made provision for his [i.e. man's] salvation by means of the Law and the prophets'.[704] Further evidence is found in Theophanes, who objects that the iconoclasts were 'extolling the Jewish-minded Constantine as a prophet and a victor'.[705] Moreover, in her argument for an iconoclast model behind the *Khludov Psalter*, Auzépy draws attention to the overwhelming presence of the Old Testament miniatures and the dominant presence of King David, especially in his role as a prophet, in which he is always depicted in the garments of a Byzantine emperor.[706] I believe Auzépy's hypothesis in favour of the existence of an iconoclast psalter and the Isaurian adoption of David can be corroborated. The last entry on the reign of Constantine V in the *Brussels Chronicle* states that: '[h]e gave those in the Church the communion hymns for the Lord's feast of Theophany, Holy Saturday, Pentecost, and the Ascension, after having composed[?] them'.[707] Külzer considered this among the most important testimonies of the entire *Brussels Chronicle*, because it reveals, as his study demonstrates, that the suppression of the Psalm 148:1, which had previously only been loosely dated between the seventh and tenth centuries, can be placed in the reign of Constantine V.[708] Although it is no direct evidence, it is worth noting that the *Khludov Psalter* indeed does not feature the mentioned Ps. 148:1. Külzer is correct in being cautious with accepting the testimony of Constantine V as the author of hymns at face value, but he also adds that since the authorship of theological tracts is generally accepted, this claim may not be as far-fetched as it appears at first look.[709] Nevertheless, the relevant aspect of this testimony is that Constantine seems to have at least adver-

[701] Łewond, tr. Arzoumanian, esp. 73–8, 80; also ibid., 85–7 (the prophets announcing the coming of Christ); 99–100 (message of the prophets concerning the veneration of the cross).
[702] See Ch. 1, The cross monument in front of the Chalke Gate.
[703] See further references to the prophets in *Ekloge*, prooimion, 26–7, 96–101, 107, and more broadly Humphreys 2015, 93–105.
[704] See above, n. 659.
[705] Theophanes, 501.24–5, Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Ἰουδαιόφρονα μακαρίζοντες ὡς προφήτην καὶ νικητὴν, tr. Mango and Scott, 685.
[706] Auzépy 2003, esp. 15ff.
[707] Brussels Chronicle, 32.3–6, οὗτος παρέδωκε τοῖς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ κοινωνικὰ τῶν δεσποτικῶν ἑορτῶν, τῶν ἁγιῶν Θεοφανιῶν, τοῦ μεγάλου Σαββάτου, τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς, καὶ τῆς Ὑψώσεως μελίσας αὐτᾶ. Rendering of μελίσας as 'composing' is adopted from Külzer 1991, 442, 'gedichtet hatte', but it is not certain.
[708] Külzer 1991, 442–4, 'Die hier unter der Regierungszeit Konstantins V. aufgeführte Notiz, die noch einmal in den Bereich der Liturgiegeschichte führt, gehört, obwohl bislang vollkommen unbeachtet, zu den wichtigsten Mitteilungen innerhalb des Chronicon Bruxellense'.
[709] Ibid, 444.

tised himself as the author of hymns, and that he was engaged with regulating the content of the liturgy; moreover, regulating every aspect of churchgoing agrees with broader conclusions about Constantine V's church policies.[710] Such engagement would be in connection with the composition of psalters and the persona of the King David, especially combined with the proclamation of the emperor as 'knowing the will of God' and the role of the prophets and David in Isaurian ideology. Combined with the explored expansion of the ideology underlying the *Ekloge* into the canon law, we can also conclude that both served as the principle tool of regulating lives and morals of the subjects for the sake of protection and salvation firmly under imperial control imbued with apostolic, and perhaps even prophetic authority.

Lastly, it is worth considering that the proposed imperial ideology carries certain similarities with that presented by Eusebios in the so-called 'two orations' on Constantine the Great.[711] As Sansterre demonstrated, Eusebios posits a messianic role for the emperor in parallel with God; for his part, the emperor, as an interpreter of the Logos, calls men to the knowledge of God, removes all defilement from the earthly empire, ensuring that all his subjects are saved.[712] Moreover, Sansterre stresses the importance of teaching in the work of salvation – 'cette œuvre de salut est avant tout une œuvre d'enseignement' – and the role of the emperor as a teacher, who communicates to his subjects the divine knowledge and announces the laws of truth.[713] Just like with the *Life of Constantine the Great*, there is no evidence that Emperor Constantine V and his advisers were familiar with this Eusebios' text and the underlying ideology, but Magdalino reminds us that the iconophiles did mention the use of Eusebios by the iconoclasts, and further proposes that 'we should ask how a theologically-minded emperor and his clerical advisers who were combing the writings of the Fathers for statements against images could have failed to turn up at least the main ecclesiastical sources for Constantine the Great'.[714] Ultimately, the discussed invocation of the apostolic authority can go back to Constantine the Great, and it is interesting that Stephen the Deacon claims in *The Life of St Stephen the Younger* that the bishops during the Hiereia council went as far as calling Constantine V the 'thirteenth apostle'.[715] Auzépy argues this was a deliberate distortion, since there is no such claim in the surviving *Horos*, [716] but it suggests, at the very least, that the idea of Constantine the Great as the thirteenth apostle was known in the early ninth century Constantinople.

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[710] Auzépy 2008, 283–7. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 246–7.
[711] Eusebius, *Two Orations*, 195–259. See the treatment in Sansterre 1972, esp. 135–46, and Barnes 1977. More broadly on Eusebius and his influence, Dagron 2003, 282–90.
[712] Eusebius, *Two Orations*, 199. Sansterre 1972, 139–40.
[713] Sansterre 1972, 141.
[714] Magdalino 2007a, 19–20.
[715] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §29, ὁ καὶ παρ' ὑμῖν τρισκαιδέκατος ἀπόστολος ὀνομαζόμενος.
[716] Ibid., 223, n. 211. See also Dagron 2003, 190.

Parades of infamy and displays of imperial justice

Artabasdos' usurpation (741–3)

The first major series of humiliations and punishments came in the aftermath of Artabasdos' usurpation (June 741-November 743).[717] First, Artabasdos, his two sons, and an unspecified number of accomplices were paraded in fetters through the *Diippion* gate into the Hippodrome in a humiliation spectacle preceding the games.[718] McCormick suggests that leading the criminals through the *Diippion* seems to have been particularly humiliating, although it is unclear why.[719] After the humiliation, Artabasdos and his sons were taken to prison and blinded, while their accomplices were subjected to a variety of corporeal punishments – according to Theophanes, Constantine 'blinded a multitude without number, and cut off the arms and legs of others' – and eventually exiled.[720] It seems somewhat surprising that that Artabasdos and his sons were not executed, but that is the testimony of our primary sources, and there is a later reference suggesting they were imprisoned in the Chora monastery.[721] Moreover, the political punishment of blinding normally precludes execution, and the introduction of various mutilations in the *Ekloge* replaced capital punishments presumably reflecting the Christian virtue of *philanthropia*, as professed in the proem.[722] Since this series of punishments would have taken place approximately two years after the promulgation of *Ekloge*, we can consider it the first major public demonstration of the new imperial law in practice. In this regard, it is worth considering the case of the *patrikios* Sisinnios, who had been Constantine's ally, but was later found plotting and blinded.[723] It appears that the blinding of Sisinnios was justified in a pro-Constantine text, and perhaps read out to the crowd at the time it took place. Nikephoros specifies that Sisinnios was blinded 'after being convicted', while Theophanes creates a narrative to make Emperor Constantine appear as a villain, turning against the man who had helped him and who was moreover his relative, but then concludes that Constantine had Sisinnios blinded 'by God's righteous judgement', which appears to be a remnant of an official document.[724]

[717] Nikephoros, §§64–6, and Mango's commentary, ibid., 213–16. Theophanes, 414.11–421.6; tr. and further comments, Mango-Scott, 574–83. For an exhaustive treatment of Artabasdos' reign, and the dating of the revolt see Speck 1981, especially 19–77. See also Rochow 1994, 21–9, and Artabasdos, PmbZ #632.
[718] Nikephoros, §66. Theophanes, 420–1, tr. Mango and Scott, 581.
[719] McCormick 1986, 134, n. 10.
[720] Nikephoros, §66. Theophanes, 420, tr. Mango and Scott, 581.
[721] Gero 1977, 139, n. 100, with references.
[722] On corporal punishments in Byzantium see overall Patlagean 1984, and Tirnanic 2010. On mutilations in the *Ekloge* and the concept of *philanthropia*, see Gregory 1975, and more recently Humphreys 2015, 118–25.
[723] Nikephoros, §66.
[724] Nikephoros §66, tr. Mango, 137. Theophanes, 421, tr. Mango and Scott, 581.

Theophanes also includes the story about the *patrikios* Baktangios, who had been a close accomplice of Artabasdos. Constantine had Baktangios beheaded at the Kynegion and left his head hanging at the Milion for three days.[725] Thirty years later, however,

> the unforgiving and merciless emperor ordered that man's wife to proceed to the monastery of Chora (where he had been buried), dig up his bones, place them in her pallium, and cast them at the so-called tombs of Pelagios among the bodies of executed criminals.[726] What inhumanity!'[727]

According to Theophanes, the patriarch Anastasios was also punished and humiliated along with Artabasdos and his sons; the patriarch was first publicly scourged, and then paraded at the Hippodrome seated backwards on a donkey.[728] Interestingly, Constantine left Anastasios in the position of patriarch after this humiliation: 'after terrorizing him [the patriarch] and bending him to his will, [Constantine] seated him on the episcopal throne'.[729] According to Mellinkoff's comprehensive, although not exhaustive, survey, this is the earliest recorded instance of a humiliation by having the person riding backwards on a donkey, that would become an exceptionally widespread practice.[730] Mellinkoff does not attempt to explain the origin or particular symbolism of the earliest examples – and I have not encountered another study that does – but she adds that inversion is one of the oldest modes of ridicule.[731] Indeed, riding backwards was an immediately obvious, and probably considered humorous, inversion of the norm, and perhaps in particular an inversion of the model of Christ. It seems, however, that under the emperor Constantine V at least, this humiliation was designated for members of the clergy, or specifically for patriarchs, because the deposed patriarch Constantine II would be subjected to the same treatment in 766.[732]

Artabasdos' usurpation was a major challenge for Constantine's authority and it is not a surprise that all the major figures involved were subjected to humiliation and punishment. In contrast, only one prominent figure – or from the perspective of the surviving texts, only one named individual – was executed in the city, the *patrikios* Baktangios.[733]

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[725] Theophanes, 420.
[726] Nikephoros, §81, tr. Mango, 155, also includes a comment about the tombs of Pelagios: 'it was customary to convey thither the bodies of unbaptized pagans and of those who had died an illicit death'. See also Mango's commentary, Ibid., 222.
[727] Theophanes, 420.16–22, Mango and Scott, 581.
[728] Theophanes, 420–1.
[729] Theophanes, 420–1, tr. Mango and Scott, 581.
[730] Mellinkoff 1973, surveyed cases from antiquity to the modern times, covering vast geographic space. She notes that there are several earlier examples of parading a culprit on a donkey or another animal, but not facing backwards, or at least not specifying the direction, ibid., 154.
[731] Ibid., 168.
[732] See the following pages.
[733] It should be added that the *magistros* Theophanes had been already killed in a battle earlier, Theophanes, 419.

Theophanes does add that Constantine 'killed many other prominent men who had assisted Artabasdos, blinded a multitude without number, and cut off the arms and legs of others', and even 'allowed the provincial officers who had entered the City with him to break into houses and seize citizens' possessions and inflicted numberless other calamities to the City'. [734] This kind of reaction would not be counterintuitive; Nikephoros also preserves that Constantine had 'the accomplices in the plot subjected to flogging and various [other] punishments and condemned to exile'.[735] What Theophanes claims to have been a random pillaging of the capital, might have in fact been the confiscation of property of those exiled by imperial officers. Constantine may of course have allowed the sacking of the houses of some who have supported Artabasdos; even so, it seems to have been limited to officers only, not a wide-spread looting as perhaps at the time of the emperor Theodosios III.[736] However, I think the vagueness of Theophanes' description makes the passage somewhat suspicious of being a later exaggeration against the hated iconoclast emperor. We should also keep in mind the testimony from Nikephoros, who says that Constantine welcomed the refugees from the City during the siege and treated them 'very well'.[737]

In any case, it is noteworthy that in the aftermath of this major upheaval, a considerable number of high-profile figures involved in the treason were exposed to public humiliation and parody, in the patriarch's case, and that, by comparison, there were only very few executions of high-ranking individuals. These were, like blinding, performed in a more secluded space – the blinding in prison, and the execution at the Kynegion. In comparison, Constantine's father Leo also made a public statement at the Hippodrome in a similar context, but he had the would-be usurpers beheaded at the Kynegion and then paraded their heads on poles. Constantine's act resembles more that of Emperor Justinian II in a very similar context. Theophanes reports that after managing to retake the capital, Justinian had the usurpers Apsimar and Leontios paraded in chains around the city, and:

> while games were being held in the Hippodrome and he himself [Justinian II] was sitting on the throne, they were dragged publicly and thrown at his feet; and he trod on their necks until the end of the first race while the people cried, *You have set your foot on the asp and the basilisk, and you have trodden on the lion and the dragon!* [Ps. 90(91):13] He then sent them to the Kynegion to be beheaded.[738]

[734] Theophanes, 420, tr. Mango and Scott, 581.
[735] Nikephoros, §66.
[736] Nikephoros, §51. Theophanes, 386.
[737] Nikephoros, §66, tr. Mango, 137.
[738] Theophanes, 375.6–13; tr. Mango and Scott, 523.

The major conspiracy against Constantine V (765/6)

In terms of internal enemies and public spectacles of violence, the years 765-767 were exceptionally eventful, resulting from the discovery of a major conspiracy against the emperor involving nineteen high-ranking officials, Patriarch Constantine II and probably the monk Stephen (later St Stephen the Younger).[739]

The first in a series of related events was the execution of the monk Stephen on the streets of Constantinople on 28 November 765.[740] Later iconophile literature would present St Stephen as a martyr for the iconophile cause, but scholars demonstrated that Stephen was most likely involved in the plot, and in any case suspected of it.[741] The members of the *tagmata* took Stephen from his cell in the *Praitorion* prison, located at the Forum, tied the rope to one of his legs and had him dragged down the *Mese*; this 'parade' made a stop at the Forum of the Bull, where Stephen's skull was split open with a club,[742] and the body was then dragged all the way to the western end of the city and thrown in the pits of Pelagios.[743] The same treatment would later be repeated against the already beheaded body of the deposed patriarch Constantine II, and Peter the Stylite, suggesting perhaps that the punishment had something to do with their monastic ranks.[744] In any case, dropping bodies in the pits of Pelagios clearly marked them as criminals. Tirnanić further argued that dragging someone down the Mese towards the pits of Pelagios had an inverse relationship with imperial triumph; while emperors would move from the gates towards the heart of the city, Hagia Sophia and the imperial palace, criminals would be going in the opposite direction, symbolizing expulsion from the community.[745]

Both Nikephoros and Theophanes state that following Stephen's execution, 'many men invested with authority as well as members of the army' were charged with worshipping icons and punished with 'unusual' tortures, exile, and death, but both accounts are unspecific and we hear of no names, unlike the following event involving the nineteen officials.[746] In addition, Constantine imposed 'a general oath on all the subjects of his empire that no one would worship an icon', and forced the patriarch Constantine II 'to mount the ambo [of Hagia Sophia], raise the holy life-giving Cross, and swear that he

[739] Nikephoros, §§81–4. Theophanes, 436–42. *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§55–6, §§65–73. Some additional details in Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 516D–517B, 521D–524B. In general, see Rochow 1994, 29–32, 59–68, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 234–47.
[740] Nikephoros, §81. Theophanes, 436–7. *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§68–72.
[741] Attested in Theophanes, 438. See Auzépy, 1999, 271ff. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 235–7.
[742] See a similar scene during Emperor Phokas' execution, *Chronicon Paschale*, 701.
[743] Nikephoros, §81. Theophanes, 436–7. *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§68–72. The *Life*, of course, treats Stephen's martyrdom at length, with §§70–1 including all the gory details of the destruction of Stephen's physical body.
[744] Patriarch Constantine had a monastic rank before the emperor forced him to assume a clerical one.
[745] Tirnanić 2010, 72–5.
[746] Quote at Nikephoros, §81, tr. Mango, 155. Theophanes, 437.

was not a worshipper of icons'.[747] These events are a good example of Iconoclasm being a tool for imposition of imperial authority in a situation where the emperor had a good reason to doubt the allegiance of his subjects, even if the account is exaggerated. The patriarch's act also underlines the priority given to the cross, a symbolic act resembling that recorded in the exhibition of the cross ceremony.[748]

In the same (Byzantine) year, on 21 August 766, Constantine organized hippodrome games and another set of humiliations in the arena: '[h]e held up to public scorn and dishonor the monastic habit in the Hippodrome by ordering that each monk hold a woman by the hand and so process through the Hippodrome while being spat upon and insulted by all the people'.[749] This was the most famous example of Constantine V's campaign against the monks and monasteries in the capital, which iconophile sources depicted as part of an assault on monasticism at large.[750] Recent scholarship, however, demonstrated that monasteries continued to thrive under the stable conditions of Constantine V's reign, that there were many monks who supported iconoclast policy, and that it was rather an assault against a particular group of monks, largely in response to the great conspiracy.[751] That being said, it is important not to marginalize this campaign,[752] and keep in mind that such public humiliation could not fully be contained to a specific group, as Auzépy concludes:

> Cependant, si la persecution n'a pas touché tous le moines, la forme qu'elle a prise, en attaquant les symboles de l'etat monastique avec l'arme cuisante de la derision, à humilié l'ensemble des moines. Ce qui fut subi par certains a, par sa forme, attaint la fierté, la respectabilité et l'image de tous.[753]

Besides the potential hostility connected with the plot which is not certain, I think it is worth considering whether this instance may have been a part of Constantine's attempt at (forcefully) regulating monastic communities. That the regulation was necessary is clear from the extensive reforms undertaken in the early ninth century, largely associated with Theodore of Stoudios, but also Patriarch Nikephoros.[754] Particularly relevant is Nikephoros' measure of closing the double monasteries.[755] Therefore, the public humiliation of monks and nuns forced to walk hand in hand as married couples, could have

[747] Quotes at Theophanes, 437, tr. Mango and Scott, 604. Similarly, in Nikephoros, §81.
[748] See ch. 1.
[749] Theophanes, 437–8, tr. Mango and Scott, 605. Described also by Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 521D–524B.
[750] See the full list of references in Gero 1977, 122–30.
[751] See Gero 1977, 122–41; Auzépy 1997, 34–40, ead., 1999, 271ff.; Magdalino 2007a, 8–11; and most recently Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 234–47, with further literature and examples.
[752] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 234–47.
[753] Auzépy 1997, 39.
[754] Hatlie 2007, 312–52.
[755] *Life of Nikephoros*, 159–60. *ODB*, II, 1392, s.v. 'Monastery, Double'.

been a measure against immoral behavior of particular monastic communities. It is noteworthy that according to the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, the emperor punished the nun Anna under accusations of having sexual intercourse with the monk Stephen.[756]

Although we do not know the full extent of the conspiracy against emperor Constantine V in 765-6, it clearly involved an unusually large group of high-ranking figures belonging to both the civil and the military hierarchy, some of which would have had access to the emperor. Thus, among the conspirators were the *spatharios* Strategios, the commander of the *Excubitores*, one of the two *tagmata* regiments, two *strategoi* of provincial armies (Sicily and Thrace), two former *logothetai* of the Course, one imperial *protostrator*, who would have accompanied the emperor while on horseback,[757] and the patriarch Constantine II, although the nature of his involvement is not entirely clear (see below).[758] On 25 August 766, only four days after the humiliation of monks and nuns, the nineteen officials 'were brought to the Hippodrome and paraded for having made evil designs on the emperor […] After exposing these men to scorn during the hippodrome games and causing them to be spat upon and cursed by all the people, he [i.e. Constantine V] delivered his verdict',[759] to which the members of the demes may have responded with 'The verdict is just!'[760] Again, we have a testimony of public proclamation of justice, and Constantine's verdict was capital punishment for the two brothers, the *patrikios* Constantine, former *logothete* of the Course, and the mentioned Strategios (also the first two names in Theophanes' list), who were beheaded in the Kynegion.[761] According to Theophanes 'there was much lamentation over them by all the people, so that when the emperor had been informed of it, he was annoyed and flogged the prefect Prokopios, whom he deprived of his office for having permitted this manifestation'.[762] This incident is interesting testimony to the potential danger of executing high-ranking individuals (I will return to this in my conclusion to this section). As for the rest of the

[756] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §32.
[757] *ODB*, 1748–9, s.v. 'Protostrator'.
[758] Theophanes, 438, tr. Mango and Scott, 605, gives a list of the eight foremost conspirators, specifying their offices, titles, and personal ties: the *patrikios* Constantine, former *logothete* of the Course, nicknamed Podopagouros (PmbZ #3822); his brother *spatharios* Strategios, *domestikos* of the *Excubitores*, one of the two tagmata regiments (PmbZ #7130); Antiochos, former *logothete* of the Course and *strategos* of Sicily (PmbZ #513); David, *spatharios* and *komes* of Opsikion (PmbZ #1258), follower of Beser (presumably PmbZ #1010); Theophylaktos of Ikonion, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Thrace (PmbZ #8293); *spatharios* Christopher (PmbZ #1100), follower of the patrician Himerios (PmbZ #2590); *spatharios* and imperial *protostrator* Constantine (PmbZ #3825), son of the *patrikios* Bardanes (PmbZ #758); Theophylaktos the *candidatus* (PmbZ #8292), follower of Marinakes (PmbZ #4772).
[759] Theophanes, 438, tr. Mango and Scott, 605. Nikephoros, §83, tr. Mango, 157, is more specific, saying that they 'were attempting to plot against his [Constantine's] authority'. Both texts allege that Constantine V had accused the men falsely.
[760] The acclamation is attested in the Parastaseis, §40, referring, supposedly to a fifth-century event. Since a fair number of acclamations/chants of the factions scattered in the Parastaseis (§29, 35a, 38, 59, 81) are genuine, yet occasionally with an obviously erroneous attribution (e.g. §38), Cameron and Herrin concluded that the authors probably had access to some kind of epitome of acclamations detached from the context, ibid., 44–5, 171.
[761] Theophanes, 438, tr. Mango and Scott, 605.
[762] Theophanes, 438, tr. Mango and Scott, 605.

conspirators, Constantine had them blinded and exiled.[763] Theophanes adds that, allegedly, 'every year the madman [i.e. Constantine V] ordered that emissaries should be sent to their respective places and give them one hundred lashes'.[764] Considering the magnitude of the conspiracy, it is understandable why Constantine wanted to make a threatening statements about what one had to expect in the case of treason, and the posthumous humiliation of Baktangios is very telling in this regard. It was a reminder of the punishments in the aftermath of Artabasdos' usurpation, signaling that conspirators would be denied even a proper burial, regardless of their social status. Perhaps because he did not belong to the noble families, the punishment of the deposed patriarch Constantine was extraordinarily harsh.

On 30 August, five days after the punishment of the nineteen officials, a group of clergymen, monks, and laymen, made known to the emperor that the patriarch was also involved in the plot.[765] The emperor sent his men to interrogate the patriarch, and had him immediately deposed and exiled, and his men sealed the patriarchate.[766] On 16 November, the emperor elected Niketas, the presbyter of the Church of the Holy Apostles, as the new patriarch.[767] A little less than a year later (6–7 October 767), the deposed patriarch Constantine II was subjected to an elaborate process of punishment and humiliation. First, he was brought to Hagia Sophia for a humiliating public trial. Theophanes relates that the 'tyrant Constantine' had the patriarch flogged so much that he was unable to walk, so he was brought to Hagia Sophia in a cart. Nikephoros also states that the patriarch came to the church 'riding in a cart,' but does not mention the flogging.[768] It may be that riding in a cart was part of the humiliation, although I am not aware of such practice. The former patriarch was accompanied by an imperial secretary (*asecretis*) who carried the charges against the former patriarch; after the citizens have gathered inside Hagia Sophia on the imperial orders, the charges were read out 'so everyone could hear it. And at every item the *asecretis* would hit him in the face, while the patriarch Niketas was sitting in the *synthronon* and witnessing the scene'.[769] Constantine II was then set up straight in the ambo, his *omophorion*, the symbol of the episcopal dignity, was removed, and the patriarch Niketas pronounced anathema. Nikephoros specifies that 'the new patriarch read out those same charges in front of the sanctuary in a

[763] Theophanes, 438, tr. Mango and Scott, 605. Nikephoros, §83.
[764] Theophanes, 438, tr. Mango and Scott, 605.
[765] Both Nikephoros, §83, and Theophanes, 438–9, tr. Mango and Scott, 605–6, make claims that emperor made the people say this, but this is highly suspicious; both authors make the same claim about the nineteen officials. See Gero 1977, 132–5, for additional testimonies from oriental sources, independent of Byzantine chroniclers, which all present patriarch's involvement in the plot as reason for his deposition and execution.
[766] Theophanes, 440, tr. Mango and Scott, 608. Nikephoros, §84, tr. Mango, 159.
[767] Theophanes, 440, tr. Mango and Scott, 608. On Niketas I, see PmbZ # 5404.
[768] Theophanes, 441, tr. Mango and Scott, 609. Nikephoros, §84, tr. Mango, 159.
[769] Theophanes, 441, tr. Mango and Scott, 609. Similarly in Nikephoros, §84.

low voice'.[770] If we consider that the main charge, prepared by the imperial chancery, was (among others) the treason against the emperor, and that the patriarch was practically announcing the charges to the divinity, this detail represents a public statement about the sacredness of Constantine V's imperial dignity made in front of a full Hagia Sophia. Theophanes adds that they called Constantine II 'Dark-face' and removed him from the church facing backwards.[771] We know that the faces of criminals were blackened for infamy parades,[772] and leading the patriarch backwards is another example of humiliating inversion, symbolizing expulsion.

On the next day, further humiliation of Constantine occurred during the chariot races:

> They shaved his face, plucked his beard, the hair of his head, and of his eyebrows, and after putting on him a short sleeveless garment of silk, seated him backwards on a saddled ass and made him hold its tail; and so they brought him into the Hippodrome by way of *Diippion*,[773] while all the people and the demes cursed and spat on him. The ass was led by his nephew Constantine whose nose had been cut off. When he had come to the benches of the demes, they came down, spat on him and kept throwing dust on him. […] they threw him off his ass and trampled on his neck; and after seating him opposite of the benches of the demes, they made him listen to derisory words until the end of the races.[774]

We may presume that the charges were read again, but in any case, following the highly public performance in Hagia Sophia, it is safe to say that everybody knew them already. At the hippodrome, the patriarch was stripped as naked as one gets, with his clothes and all the hair on his head and face removed.[775] The short sleeveless tunic of silk (ἀμανίκωτον κονδόν), in which he was then dressed, was possibly meant to represent the archpriest's garment called *ephoud*, or its undergarment, described in Exodus 28:6–30. Responding to the question: 'What sort of thing was the object called in the Law the *ephoud*?',[776] Anastasios of Sinai mentions κονδόν in his answer no. 2: 'The shoulder garment of the High Priest had the form of a cape, which was short and came down only as far as the thighs; the high priests wore this when they offered incense and performed religious ceremonies.'[777] This was then further ridicule of the archpriest's dignity, made patently obvious through the discrepancy between the fine costume, worn for religious

[770] Nikephoros §84, tr. Mango, 159.
[771] Theophanes, 441, tr. Mango and Scott, 609.
[772] McCormick 1986, 142–3, n. 41, with references.
[773] Just like Artabasdos and his accomplices, see above, n. 719.
[774] Theophanes 441–2, tr. Mango and Scott, 609–10. Nikephoros, §83–§84.
[775] Note the double emphasis on stripping the patriarch naked not fully conveyed in Mango and Scott's translation, Theophanes, 441.19–21, ἐψίλωσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ὄψιν καὶ ἐγύμνωσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν γενειάδα καὶ τὰς τῆς κεφαλῆς τρίχας καὶ τῶν ὀφρύων.
[776] Anastasios of Sinai, *Questiones*, §98, 154–5, Engl. tr. Munitiz 2011, 224–5. See also the mention of the *ephoud* as being an ornament of Aaron in the *Life of Tarasios*, §59.8. Since in the *Life*, Aaron's garment and regalia are presented in negative terms as unnecessarily lavish, it may be assumed the dress was considered a ceremonial piece.
[777] Anastasios of Sinai, *Questiones*, §98, 154–5, tr. Munitiz 2011, 224–5.

ceremonies, and the now hairless man riding backwards an ass holding its tail. That the ass was led by the patriarch's nephew Constantine already subjected to *rhinokopia*, means that he was also involved in conspiracy and that the intention was to visibly mark him as a culprit. Perhaps the aim was to mark the patriarch's whole family as treasonous.[778] The culmination of the humiliation was the trampling of the former patriarch's neck. Ritual trampling, the so-called *calcatio colli*, was sometimes included in imperial triumphs, when the emperors trampled the necks of defeated enemies, especially usurpers – for example, the mentioned case of Justinian II trampling the necks of Apsimar and Leontios for the duration of one race.[779] The link to an imperial triumph is once again present, but, significantly, in the case of patriarch Constantine it was not the emperor, but 'the people', that is, members of the demes, who performed the ritual humiliation. Just like the emperor left it to the demes to perform the ritual murder of the defeated Bulgarians a few years before, now he let them perform the ritual humiliation of a traitor. We may recall that in the *Ekloge*, treason was considered as an attack against the community,[780] and the people trampling the traitor may be considered a translation of that sentiment into a public performance. It certainly provided a public justification of the act.

In its aftermath, on 15 October, the emperor sent a group of *patrikioi*, apparently to extort from Constantine II an affirmation of the synod in Hiereia; after they had succeeded, they supposedly proclaimed: '[d]epart into darkness, and under anathema'.[781] In conclusion, the former patriarch was given his final verdict, and beheaded at the Kynegion. His head was hanged by the ears at the Milion for three days, 'so the people could see it', while his body, just like those of the monks Stephen and Peter the Stylite, was dragged down the Mese and thrown in the tombs of Pelagios. After three days, the head was thrown there too.[782] Thus, in the final instance the patriarch was again anathematized, and degraded to the position of the lowliest of criminals, excluded from the community in every possible sense.

The whole process against the deposed patriarch Constantine II was extraordinarily elaborate and cruel, apparently, even by the standards of the time. The emperor clearly wanted maximum publicity for the whole process, with the three main stages of humiliation and punishment taking place in highly public venues, and increasingly so: inside

[778] Although *rhinokopia* was the punishment for sexual offenders in the *Ekloge*, 17, sections 23–8, 30–4, it has been applied to the usurpers as well; e.g., Constantine's father Leo subjected a number of figures involved in Anastasios' plot to *rhinokopia*, Theophanes, 400–1.
[779] Possibly the earliest example is the triumph of Emperor Honorius in Rome in 416, McCormick 1986, 57–8, n. 76. See also *ODB*, III, 2121–2, s.v. 'Triumph'.
[780] See above, n. 694.
[781] Theophanes 442, tr. Mango and Scott, 610.
[782] Theophanes, 441–2, tr. Mango and Scott, 610. Nikephoros, §84.

Hagia Sophia, at the hippodrome and, eventually, along the main street of the city – with the head left at the Million for an additional three days. Yet, it remains unclear what might have been the reason for such an exceptional treatment, apart from the involvement in the plot. This might have been a reason enough, of course; even so, the treatment of the former patriarch was more severe than of any other figure involved in the treason, as far as we can tell.[783]

Several conclusions can be drawn from the outlined cases. First, public demonstrations of justice were clearly very important for emperor Constantine V, as the examples of verdicts delivered to Sisinnios, the nineteen officials, or the former patriarch Constantine II show. While fair administration of justice was a traditional facet of an ideal emperor and one may assume that every emperor would pay attention to it, it must be stressed that we do not find such explicit statements of public verdicts in similar cases under the emperors Justinian II, Constantine V's father Leo III, or even his son Leo IV or grandson Constantine VI.[784] I am not saying that no verdicts were delivered, of course, but the evidence is suggestive of a strong emphasis on the law under the emperor Constantine V, which aligns well with the conclusions about the promulgation of the *Ekloge* and its appendices. Closely related to this is the evident involvement of the wider population with the acts of humiliation and punishment, which helped alienating the culprits from society,[785] and mold the public opinion thus solidifying popular support for the emperor; it provided public justification of the acts, in accordance with the law, and (re)asserted imperial authority, as punishing the criminals protected the community. In this regard, the role of the demes was probably vital – especially considering that the tagmata were integrated with them. Constantine V's strategy of relying on popular support is tied to the opposition that clearly formed among the elites, and is indirectly related to another phenomenon that emerges from this survey: relatively few executions of high-ranking individuals – Baktangios, and the brothers Constantine and Strategios. This suggests that the execution of high-ranking individuals could be potentially dangerous because an emperor risked alienating a large(r) group with social or political ties to the figure(s) punished – the reaction to the execution of the two brothers is telling in this regard. Such opposition may also arise from more 'neutral' individuals of equal rank, since high ranks provided protection from certain types of punishments, the norm going back to ancient Roman law. Finally, the link between imperial triumphs, humiliations and punishments of

[783] Gero 1977, 131–5.
[784] Justinian II's return to power, Nikephoros, §42; Theophanes, 374–5. Anastasios' plot against Leo III, Nikephoros, §57; Theophanes 400–1. The plot of the *Kaisar* Nikephoros against Leo IV, Theophanes 450–1 – it should be added that Leo IV did convene a *silention* to make public the plot, but there is no statement about the verdict. Constantine VI, conspiracy in name of one of Constantine V's sons, Theophanes, 467–8; the rebellion of the Armeniacs, Theophanes, 468–9.
[785] Coleman 1990, 46–7, 57–9.

criminals is worth stressing again. The parading of conspirators in fetters was not unlike parading captured prisoners in triumphal processions; the trampling on the neck of the patriarch has already been discussed. Moreover, it may not be a coincidence that the humiliation of monks and nuns, and the parade of nineteen traitors took place in the second half of the month of August, which appears to have acquired a 'triumphant' significance for the Isaurian emperors, and Constantine V in particular: the exhibition of the cross, the victory over the Arabs, and the council in Hiereia, all took place in the month of August.

Building achievements and imperial ideology

Constantine's reign was marked by adept administration that helped revitalize the capital which had reached its nadir in the mid-eighth century;[786] the discussed series of calamities in the 740s left Constantinople damaged and depopulated.[787] Apart from the initial portion of the Theodosian Walls, the major edifices in the city damaged in the 740 earthquake were repaired under Constantine.[788] Most notably the church of Hagia Eirene, that was famously decorated with the costly mosaic of the cross in the apse (fig. 22), probably completed soon after the council in Hiereia (754).[789] Countering the demographic issue, settlers were brought from various parts of Greece to repopulate the city.[790] Imperial administration also managed to secure a steady stock of basic food supplies at affordable prices that was still remembered in the early ninth century.[791] A surviving 'poor' token in the names of Constantine and Leo (751–75), testifies, as Bendall and Nesbitt stress, that the distributions during the Christmas dinner for the poor, demonstrating imperial munificence and philanthropy, were taking place already under Constantine V.[792] In his excellent study, Magdalino concludes that the foundations for the future prosperity of Constantinople were laid under Constantine V, stressing that the choice to focus on the capital and invest heavily in revitalizing it, was rooted in ideology, that is, Constantine's 'intense and rigorous interpretation of his imperial duty'.[793]

[786] The best study on infrastructural and economic measures in Constantinople under Constantine V is Magdalino 2007a. See also Rochow 1994, 35–42, and Ousterhout 2001.
[787] See above, sub-heading 'Religious Zeal'.
[788] See more details in Magdalino 2007, 5–11.
[789] Although the mosaic is relatively simple, Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 213–4, stress that it would have been very expensive, since it contains extraordinary number of gold tesserae, and the technical level was exceptionally high.
[790] Nikephoros, §68. Theophanes, 429.
[791] Iconophile authors criticize Constantine's fiscal measures denouncing him as the New Midas, and claim that the provinces suffered heavily, but, as Magdalino 2007a, 13–4, notes, this would have been a popular measure for the citizens of Constantinople.
[792] Bendall and Nesbitt, 1990.
[793] Magdalino 2007a, quote at 24.

The restoration of the aqueduct (766) or, the slaying of a dragon

Among the building achievements of Constantine V's reign inside Constantinople, the restoration of the aqueduct of Valens in 766, defunct since 626, counts as the most significant.[794] The repairs were undertaken in response to a severe drought; the chroniclers report that 'water disappeared from the City' and that 'cisterns and baths were put out of commission'.[795] The repairs were a massive undertaking and the work force had to be brought from the provinces; Theophanes preserves a list of workers and their origin,[796] while Nikephoros specifies that they were provided for from the state treasury.[797] The result was an improved water supply in the capital that would have been immediately obvious to the citizens, if the baths and fountains began operating again. In the words of Theophanes: 'When the work had thus been completed, water flowed into the City.'[798]

Testimony from the chroniclers, especially Theophanes, already suggests that the restoration of the aqueduct was celebrated as a great achievement at the time of its completion. In addition, we also have an encomiastic tale with a popular flavor surviving in the ninth-century *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, portraying Constantine V as an epic hero slaying a lion and then a dragon that was guarding the aqueduct and killing citizens.[799]

Unfortunately, a folio (or folios) is (are) missing from the manuscript and the tale breaks off just as Constantine enters the dragon's den, but there is no doubt that the emperor prevailed.[800] The episode has received attention from a number of scholars: Adontz was the first to address the legend; Gero traced its classical parallels; Auzépy focused on what the dragon was symbolizing, arguing it was idolatry; looking at parallel examples from the Frankish kingdom and Abbasid caliphate, Stoclet argued that the legend celebrated Constantine V as re-founder of the city and further proposed that it may have been set to coincide with Constantine's *quinquennalia*, specifically the 25th year of reign; finally, Longo emphasized the mention of the aqueduct and focused, like Auzépy, on the

[794] Nikephoros, §85. Theophanes, 440. In the period between 626 and 766, the city was supplied through the aqueduct of Hadrian, Crow, Bardill, Bayliss 2008, 10–20. See also Ousterhout 2001, 18–9, and Magdalino 2007a, 5–6.
[795] Theophanes, 440, tr. Mango and Scott, 608.
[796] Theophanes, 440, tr. Mango and Scott, 608: 'he [Constantine V] collected artisans from different places and brought from Asia and Pontos 1,000 masons and 200 plasterers, from Hellas and the islands 500 clay-workers, and from Thrace itself 5,000 labourers and 200 brickmakers'.
[797] Nikephoros, Breviarium, §85.
[798] Theophanes, 440, tr. Mango and Scott, 608.
[799] *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, 422.46–423.7. For Waitz's dating, see ibid., 398.
[800] Ibid., 423.10–6. According to Bertolini 1974, 114–22, there are two, or perhaps three missing folios. Already Adontz 1934, 11, hinted that the missing page(s) might not be a coincidence, and Auzépy 2002, 88, took this further, arguing that the page(s) was torn out to remove the positive mention of the council of Hiereia in 754, which, she insists, 'certainement' featured there. For the Neapolitan context, with references to older literature, see Longo 2012, 221–4.

symbolism of the dragon, proposing that it celebrated the defeat of the plague.[801] Despite no lack of studies I believe their valuable insights can be further expanded; moreover, the paucity of the surviving material that casts a positive light on Constantine V, and the tale's ideological representation of an emperor that is almost without parallel in Byzantium, warrant additional inquiry. I will first present the text and analyse and contextualize the main aspects and how these relate to Constantine; I will then look into the broader evidence of the relevant aspects of dragon-slaying and try to trace this motif in the Byzantine symbolic universe, as near to the time of Constantine V as possible, and offer a range of interpretations in conclusion.

It is noteworthy that the epic tale was the very first piece of information about Constantine after he had been introduced in the narrative.[802] It relates as follows:

> It is said that this Constantine was a particularly strong man, who in battle killed a lion, the wildest beast, and also opposed and destroyed a dragon all by himself. For when it blocked the aqueduct with its size and killed many with its foulness, and when he found no other solution, Constantine placed himself in danger for the sake of all, deciding to combat the dragon himself. A coat of mail, armed with scythes, was made for him, which from all sides he strengthened with the sharpest razors, and then he arrived at the place where this foulest dragon was resting. Without hesitation, leaving behind his men, he entered alone …[803]

Looking at the symbolic elements in the narrative, we can see that Constantine is first said to have slain a wild beast (a lion) and then triumphed over a supernatural one (the dragon) that was guarding the water. Whilst these are all ancient motifs, we can nevertheless find examples contemporary with Constantine V's lifetime. Besides the *Gesta*, the testimonies of Constantine V slaying lions are preserved in the Armenian sources. In the chronicle of Łewond, Ashot Bagratuni speaks to his compatriots about 'Kostandin [Constantin V] fils de Tewon [Léon III], qui, un jour, dans un combat corps à corps contre de redoutables bêtes féroces, tua un lion comme les petits d'une chèvre'[804], while the eleventh-century chronicle of Samuel of Ani relates that Constantine 'killed five lions, one after the other, in one day'.[805] Singlehandedly killing a lion, or more generally wild

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[801] Adontz 1934, 9–12. Gero 1978. Auzépy 2002. Stoclet 2005. Longo 2012.
[802] *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, 422.42–6, Calvus episcopus sedit ann. 12, mens. 4, dies 3. *Hic inter cetera boniatis studia sancti Sossi non longe ab urbe oratorium instituit, sic in sublime erectum, ut universa quae in circuitu posita sunt conspicere possint. Fuit autem temporibus domni Stephani papae et usque ad annum quadregesimum quartum Constantini imperatoris et Leoni, filius eius, anno undecimo.*
[803] Ibid., 422.46–423.7, *Hunc aiunt Constantinum robustiorem fuisse virum, qui leonem ferocissimam bestiam pugnando occidit et draconi se opposuit et ipsum interemit. Nam dum quadam aquaeductum sua magnitudine detineret et multos fetore suo perimeret nullumque alium consilium repperiret, semet ipsum pro omnibus Constantinus periculo dedit, statuens semet ipsum cum dracone conflicturus. Factaque sibi loricam falcatam, quem novaculis acutissimis ex omni parte munivit, atque ad locum, ubi ille teterrimus draco quiescebat, devenit. Nihil conctatus, relictos suos, ad eum solus introiit …*
[804] Łewond, Fr. tr., Martin-Hisard, 170–1.
[805] Tr. Gero 1977, 176–7.

beasts, is an ancient motif, widespread across the Middle East, and a distinct feature of rulers, symbolizing their legitimacy. Well-known ancient examples include Herakles and Alexander the Great. Arguably the most important model in Byzantium was the Old Testament King David, who became a particularly popular figure under Emperor Herakleios (r. 610–41); the motif of David's fight with the lion is depicted on one of the famous 'David plates' and on a textile fragment from Egypt.[806] For the period contemporary with Constantine V's reign, we find further important evidence on silks and, to a lesser extent, on plates, originating from Byzantium and post-Sasanian Persia, on which lion-hunt or lion-fighting were very popular motifs.[807] The famous 'Mozac Hunter' silk fragment (fig. 22), featuring two mounted Byzantine emperors in a lion-hunt, has been associated with Constantine V.[808] Based on the craft, style of fabric and the imperial facial characteristics compared with other silks and numismatic evidence, Muthesius dates the silk to the eighth century and argues that it was likely crafted in an imperial workshop; based on the historical evidence, she proposes the negotiations between Emperor Constantine V and Pippin the Short in the mid-eighth century as the context in which the silk travelled from Constantinople.[809] Furthermore, the so-called 'lion strangler' motif seems to have been even more popular than the lion hunt, since one version of this scene (fig. 23), dating between the eighth and ninth centuries, has survived in close to twenty separate examples with minute variations, suggesting the same motif was crafted in different workshops.[810] It is then not altogether surprising that three separate stories of Constantine V slaying lions have survived; the 'lion-strangler' motif in particular appears to fit well Łewond's description of the fight 'corps à corps'.

Unlike dragon-slaying, the motif of triumphing over wild beasts would remain a feature of Byzantine emperors even in the post-iconoclast period.[811] The *Vita Basilii* presents Basil I (r. 867-86) as killing a wolf 'of truly prodigious dimensions' during a royal hunt, and Liutprand of Cremona reports in quite some detail how Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920-44) managed to kill a 'very ferocious lion'.[812] Although other models were available, notably King David, I think it is worth entertaining the thought of whether the legends of Constantine V, which may have been advertised through the medium of images

[806] Evans 2012, 16, fig. 6E (David plate), and 18, fig. 7 (textile fragment). For the re-assessment of 'David plates', see Leader 2000.
[807] See the various examples in Muthesius 1997, 65–79, and focusing on shared culture across the Middle East, Walker 2012, 20–37, with additional examples, fig. 13, Byzantine silk, lion-hunters on foot, 8th–9th century; fig. 15, post-Sasanian Persian plate with a lion hunter, 7th–8th century.
[808] Muthesius 1997, 68–9, pl. 24b. Walker 2012, 29–37, fig. 12.
[809] Muthesius 1997, 68–9, 74. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 225–6, and Walker 2012, 29, adopt the dating.
[810] Muthesius 1997, 67–8, 74, pl. 21a, 23b. See also Evans and Ratliff 2012, 153–4. Another, different, example of a 'lion-strangler' motif is preserved in the treasury of the Sens Cathedral, which Muthesius 1997, 58–62, 69, pl. 17a, dates to the same period, between eighth and ninth century.
[811] See the conclusions of this section below.
[812] *Vita Basilii*, tr. Ševčenko, §14. Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, III, §25, 77.382–79.429, tr. Squatriti, 120–2.

too, served as inspiration for the ninth and tenth-century legends? Walker at least proposed that Iconoclast artistic compositions may have been models for the surviving tenth century examples.[813]

Moving to the fight with the dragon, I first want to stress that although we cannot be absolutely certain that the tale originates from Constantinople, I fully agree with other scholars that the dragon *blocking the aqueduct* is a solid argument in favour of this assumption and of associating the legend with the restoration of the aqueduct in 766.[814] Moreover, when the narrative of the *Gesta* picks up after the torn page(s), it relates the story about Constantine's siege of Constantinople during the civil war with Artabasdos, again portraying the emperor in a positive light.[815] The water-impounding aspect associated with dragons is an ancient folklore motif,[816] reflecting concerns over the water supply, [817] which has been a salient feature of Greek myths from ancient times, and remained so well into the modern period.[818] Chapter 22 of the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronkai* confirms that at least one such legend was known in eighth/ninth-century Constantinople,[819] associated with the region of St Mamas. The text relates that 'there [in the region of St Mamas] once stood a terrifying bridge […] for a very big river used to pour down at that point […] and there too stood a very big bronze dragon, since some said that a dragon lived in that bridge'.[820] The imperfect (ἵστατο) suggests that the statue was no longer there, but we know that a bronze statue of a dragon existed in the palace complex of St Mamas until July 813, when the Bulgarian khan Krum led a raiding party

[813] Walker 2012, 46–63. See also Auzépy 2002, 91–3, arguing in favour of portraits of Constantine V on horseback.
[814] Practically all the scholars working on the case agree on this point, or voice no doubts. Adontz 1934, 9–12. Gero 1978. Auzépy 2002. Stoclet 2005, 158–61. Longo 2012. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 162, 383, also accept the Constantinopolitan origins although they do not engage with the legend.
[815] *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, 423.10–6. The narrative relates how due to the shortage, Emperor Constantine resorted to distributing leather coins which served as tokens under promise that these will be later exchanged for gold coins; a promise that the emperor kept apparently after taking the capital. On this aspect, see Adontz 1934, 11, and DOC3.1, 291.
[816] Thompson 1955–58, A11.11 'Impounded water.' See also, Róheim 1940a, 66.
[817] Róheim 1940b, 92.
[818] Polites 1913.
[819] Dating of the *Parastaseis* is still being contested. Earlier, the consensus has been reached that the text is a compilation of materials collected over a longer span of time, ranging from the early eighth century, and assembled in the form that survives not before the end of the eighth century. See the proposed dating by Cameron and Herrin 1984, 17–29, early eighth century; Ševčenko 1992, 289–93, turn of the ninth century; Kresten 1994, between 775 and 843; Anderson 2011, 3–5, the end of the eighth century. Most recently, however, Odorico 2014, revisited the issue and re-examined the manuscript evidence. He proposed that the collection served as the basis for a chronicle, similar to the type of material that George the Synkellos left to Theophanes to complete the *Chronographia*, but argued for the mid-ninth century as the earliest, yet preferring the late ninth or even the tenth century as the more likely date of the compilation. In the chapter 22, the *Parastaseis* describes the dragon statue as if it was no longer there; if this is to be identified with the bronze dragon taken away in July 813, as I would argue, this chapter at least could be dated to post-813, and would speak in favor of Odorico's re-dating.
[820] *Parastaseis*, §22, tr. Herrin and Cameron, 85. This is another common motif, Thompson 1955–1958, B11.3.1.2, 'Dragon's home beneath the waterfall'.

there and took 'the bronze lion of the hippodrome, the bear, and the *dragon of the fountain* [my italics I.M.]'.[821] Besides confirming the existence of the dragon statue, Theophanes may hint, I believe, at the connection with the legendary backstory described in the *Parastaseis*, since τῷ δράκοντι τοῦ ὑδρίου can be more literally translated as 'the dragon of the water'.[822] In any case, the statue, and probably the legend too, were in existence during Constantine V's time, and we know that he frequented the palace complex (or villa) of St Mamas during his reign.[823] If we agree that the tale of Constantine defeating a dragon guarding the aqueduct commemorated its restoration, it is noteworthy that it does so by employing a well-known motif, which according to Hall makes it more effective: 'myth was most effective not when it was invented *ex nihilo* but when it represented itself as a modulation of a pre-existing theme'.[824] In fact, Hall's conclusion is pertinent to all the aspects of the legend.

Looking at the encounter itself, we can see that Emperor Constantine is presented as a heroic, self-sacrificing ruler, who faces the dragon emphatically alone – a fact repeated three times in only a few lines of the text. The surviving portion suggests an epic battle, and the missing section probably featured a dense and detailed description of the contest – the prophylactic armour described in some detail surely played a role in the missing part of the story.[825] This is the second instance in which Emperor Constantine's armour is given a prominent position – as discussed, he presented himself (against tradition) in full military armour when celebrating his first triumph – and thus deserves attention.

As Gero proposed, the description of Constantine's prophylactic armour suggests that the emperor was probably swallowed by the dragon or allowed the dragon to swallow him at some point of their encounter,[826] underscoring his bravery and self-sacrifice, heavily emphasized in the surviving section already. This 'attack from the inside' stratagem is another ancient and familiar motif,[827] and Gero traced the closest parallel in Pausanias.[828] The only Christian parallel from our period (broadly conceived) survives in the

[821] Theophanes, 503.22–4, tr. Mango and Scott, 686. The removal of 'bronze animals' by Krum is also mentioned by Logothete A, ch 131, 235.74–5, [Krum] ἔπεμψεν εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Μάμαντα ἀφελόμενος τὰ ἐκεῖσε χαλκᾶ ζῷδα.
[822] Although we do not know when the statue was erected, the imperial villa/complex had been present since the mid-fifth century, *ODB*, I, 312–3, s.v. 'Bosporos'. After several centuries of existence, the presence of statues would be a common knowledge (as suggested by the *Chronographia*), yet presuming that the access to the imperial complex would have been somewhat restricted, it might have given grounds for legendary accounts about the statue, especially considering that fantastic tales existed even about the (easily-)accessible statues in the city.
[823] Theophanes, 432. Herrin and Cameron 1984, 23–4.
[824] Hall 2007, 333.
[825] Gero 1978.
[826] Ibid.
[827] See Thompson 1955–8, section F910, 'Extraordinary swallowing,' and subsections F911.7, 'Serpent swallows man'; F912, 'Victim kills swallower from within; F912.2, 'Victim kills swallower from within by cutting'. See also Róhai 1940a, 50–60.
[828] Gero 1978, 157–9, quote at 157.

passio of Marina of Antioch, who gets swallowed by the dragon and destroys it from the inside with the power of prayer.[829] Curiously, there is no male counterpart from this period, and as White notes, the 'swallowing' element is omitted in Marina's entry in the later *Synaxarion of Constantinople* (17 August), although the encounter with the dragon itself gradually became the most important aspect of her *passio*.[830] Perhaps the reason may have been to avoid association with the popular story of the prophet Jonah, interpreted as the prefiguration of Christ – the early post-iconoclast Khludov Psalter (c. 843–50), for example, features an illustration of Jonah in the belly of the sea monster (fig. 24).

The armor represented not only Constantine's *andreia* and self-sacrifice, but also his military wisdom. Constantine V's perceived 'cunningness' is remarkably well-attested in diverse contexts and sources, that range from historical to legendary and are very differently disposed towards the emperor. I have already noted Theophanes' testimony of how Constantine managed to trick the Bulgarian ambassadors and launch a surprise attack leading to the great victory at Lithosoria.[831] The just mentioned Chronicle of Samuel of Ani relates a legend of how Constantine managed to deceive the Arabs to think the Byzantine cavalry was vast by ordering the horse manure to be collected in large quantities and dumped into the river Halys for the Arabs to see.[832] In the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, Constantine is depicted as employing a 'deceitful knavery' which led to the saint's arrest.[833] Finally, the report of 'Umāra ibn Hamza, the ambassador of the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754-75), testifies that the emperor personally performed an alchemical trick – 'transmutation' of lead and copper ingots into silver and gold respectively – in front of the ambassador to obtain a diplomatic advantage.[834] Such variety of surviving evidence praising, denouncing, or just testifying to Constantine V's military genius and/or cunningness makes it more likely that the preparation of the prophylactic armour in the epic was meant to celebrate this quality of the emperor.

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[829] *Acta St Marinae*, 24.21–27.15. See below, 870.
[830] *SynaxCP*, 825. White 2008, 157–62.
[831] See above, 624.
[832] Gero, 1977, 176, also stressed that this entry is the evidence of a positive take on Constantine V's nickname Caballinos, and perhaps the origins of the infamous nickname *Kopronymos*: 'Constantine, the son of Leo, was called *Kawalinos*, that is to say 'one who gathers manure,' because [when] the Arab forces were encamped on the bank of the river Alis [=Halys], he ordered that the manure be collected and thrown into the river; when they saw this, they became frightened, believing them to be an immense army, and fled from them'. Commenting on the same detail, Adontz 1934, 9–10, n. 2, recalled the evaluation of the strength of the Persian cavalry by the abundance of horse manure from the *Anabasis*, Book I, ch. 6.
[833] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§37–8, 40.
[834] Strohmaier 1991 and 2016. I am grateful to Shannon Steiner of Bryn Mawr College for drawing my attention to Strohmaier's work. See also Rochow 1994, 82–7, with further references.

Along these lines, the previously mentioned legends about Basil I and Romanos I's slaying of wild beasts were equally tailored to fit their respective protagonist's characteristics. Basil does not demonstrate any cleverness, he just reacts swiftly and with great physical force, for which he was well-known, splitting the wolf's head in two;[835] Romanos I, on the other hand, who is recognized as a 'politician to his fingertips', shows patience and strategic cleverness in slaying the lion.[836]

Turning then to the presupposition that the legend was created to commemorate the restoration of the aqueduct, it is worth remembering the context. The restoration fell within a period when Constantine V's authority was significantly challenged for the second time and the emperor showed signs of insecurity; he imposed an oath of loyalty on his subjects, and the years of 765-6 were filled with humiliations and punishments of those who conspired against him. A boost of legitimacy would have certainly been welcome. Theophanes' testimony, which probably derives from a pro-Isaurian/pro-Constantine text, shows that the restoration of the aqueduct was advertised as a monumental building achievement, celebrating the emperor's ability to muster workers from across the empire to complete the work – specifically, from the regions of Asia and Pontos, Hellas and the islands, and Thrace – implicitly also demonstrating Constantine's firm grasp over the empire.[837] It is also noteworthy that a building achievement, essentially a deed of peace, was commemorated through a war-like epic celebrating the emperor's military qualities. If the restoration was given as much attention as argued here, it may even be hypothesized that Constantine revived another ancient practice for the occasion, i.e. a ceremonial procession along the aqueduct. The section used for ceremonies and commemorations – in Thrace (today Kurşunlugerme), c. 85 km from the city centre – features a flight of stairs leading to the top, and on the side of an arch there is a carving of an eagle clutching a serpent in its talons.[838] We do have a testimony that in 813, Emperor Michael I's wife Prokopia accompanied the army out of the capital on their campaign against the Bulgarians so that she could perform an ancient feast of Maiume at the aqueduct.[839] Leading a ceremony outside the city walls would have commemorated an exceptional building achievement of repairing the aqueduct, but it would also have

[835] *Vita Basilii*, tr. Ševčenko, §14.
[836] Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, III, §25, 77.382–79.429. Quote from Shepard 2008, 506.
[837] Theophanes, 440. Whether the emperor really needed the workforce from so many different regions of the empire remains an open question I believe. It seems quite likely of course, considering the effects of the plague on the availability of the skilled workforce and the magnitude of the works, but I think in any case we should not forget ideological significance behind such emphasis. Stoclet 2005, 162, notes that stress on mustering of labour is present in parallel examples.
[838] Crow, Bardill, Bayliss 2008, 159–60, 167–8, 175–6, item S41, fig. 7.25.
[839] Theophanes, 495, only mentions that Prokopia accompanied the army, but the *Scriptor Incertus*, 91, specifies that she went up to the aqueduct with the intention of celebrating the Maiume. On the feast of Maiume, see Greatrex and Watt 1999. On the survival of pagan Roman festivals well into the middle Byzantine period, see now Graff 2015.

sent a message that Thrace had returned firmly under Roman grasp – as mentioned, the strongholds constructed in Thrace under Constantine V were celebrated as a great success.[840] Moreover, since this was a period of peace with Bulgaria (766–72), it would have been relatively safe to venture this far outside the walls for a ceremony. This would then at the same time have reminded everyone of the achieved peace – testimony from the Brussels Chronicle that in Constantine's time 'there was a profound peace on land and sea',[841] would seem to fit this period best. Reviving such a ceremony would also have been another way of reconnecting with the late antique Roman past.[842]

Finally, the restoration of the aqueduct and the accompanying legend may have been part of celebrating Constantine V as a re-founder of Constantinople. Stoclet and Magdalino advanced this proposal independently of each other's work and based on mainly different,[843] yet not mutually exclusive arguments. Stoclet based it primarily on the dragon-slaying legend,[844] and comparable contemporary examples from two other polities contending for Roman inheritance, the Frankish kingdom and the Abbasid caliphate.[845] Magdalino does not discuss the dragon-slaying legend, but bases his argument on Constantine V's role as the 'New Constantine' and his rebuilding and especially re-populating Constantinople.[846]

Besides the metaphor for the repair of the aqueduct, and perhaps also commemorating the re-founding of the city, further symbolic messages seem implied and can be unpacked. Several scholars working on the legend focused on the symbolism behind the dragon. While Auzépy makes a solid case for the dragon representing idolatry in the miracle of St Theodore, the same cannot be said for the legend of Constantine V, even if the proposal seems quite tempting.[847] Longo stressed the importance of the aqueduct, which I believe is a good approach, but I disagree with her conclusion that the legend was commemorating the defeat of the plague.[848] Looking at parallel dragon-encounters in hagiography (apart from St Theodore), the symbolism behind the dragon is almost never anything specific; or rather, never anything more than a relatively generic symbol of evil and a mortal threat. Instead of focusing on what the dragon may represent, especially since the second part of the legend is lost, I believe a broader analysis of the dragon-slaying motif in the Byzantine symbolic universe may provide us with a better

[840] See above, 536.
[841] *Brussels Chronicle*, ed Cumont, 31.26–9, καὶ γέγονεν ἐπὶ αὐτοῦ βαθεῖα εἰρήνη κατά τε γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν.
[842] Discussed by Magdalino 2007a, and Stoclet 2005.
[843] Re-connecting with old Roman traditions is the mutual point.
[844] It is noteworthy that foundation myths often included dragon-slaying motif, see most recently Stephenson 2016, 53–6, 97ff.
[845] Stoclet 2005, esp. 162ff.
[846] Magdalino 2007a, esp. 14–24.
[847] Auzépy 2002.
[848] Longo 2012, esp. 233ff.

understanding of what such presentation makes of Constantine V; that is, what the broader implications were of an emperor being presented as a dragon-slayer.

A heroic figure fighting a dragonesque monster belongs to the primordial combat myth universally told since time immemorial, with endless variations.[849] The snake and its 'monstrous' derivatives symbolized evil more generally, but also the primordial enemy of God – noteworthy examples include the Egyptian myth of Horus and Set, and the Greek variants of Zeus and Typhoon, or Apollo and Python.[850] Among diverse versions of these legends, one aspect, present in numerous examples, is that killing a dragonesque beast marks the protagonist as a savior and heralds the advent of a new prosperous era, or a heavenly kingdom.[851] With the advent of Christianity, the symbolism did not change much. The snake and snake-like beasts represented the force of the devil, or more generally a spiritual, unseen evil, and the eschatological property of slaying a dragon was maintained; both the Old and New Testament contain prophecies (thus interpreted in the case of the Old Testament) of Christ's victory over the great dragon of Satan.[852] Thus, dragon-slaying was a property of Christ, and he empowered the saints to do the same, expressed directly in Luke 10:19: 'I have given you power to trample on snakes and scorpions'.[853]

Looking at the imperial past, the most important example of an emperor that was portrayed as killing a dragon himself was Emperor Constantine the Great. As mentioned, the testimony is preserved in Eusebios' *Vita Constantini*, stating that Constantine erected an encaustic image above the palace entrance in which he was depicted with the sign of the cross above his head, his sons at his side, and a dragon trampled and speared under his and his sons' feet.[854] Eusebios explains that the dragon represented the forces of evil laying siege to the Church of God and the invisible enemy of the human race, which Constantine defeated with the power of the cross.[855] Additionally, Constantine also issued the well-known *follis* (very rare today) depicting the labarum piercing a snake on the reverse (fig. 25).[856] It is widely accepted that the snake originally represented Licinius (an enemy from within), but was later interpreted by Christian authors

[849] See overall Fontenrose 1959.
[850] Ibid. See more recently Stephenson 2016, 48–9.
[851] See the examples in Bardill 2012, 126–8.
[852] Ps. 74:12–14; Ps. 90 (91):13; Is. 27:1; the Apocalypse of John 12, 13, and 20, especially 12:10, after the great dragon had been slain by a heavenly host, a loud voice in heaven proclaimed: 'now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah'.
[853] Invoked in the exemplary *Life of Anthony*, ed. Bartelink, §30.
[854] *VC*, III, §3, 82.8–13, tr. Cameron and Hall, 122.
[855] *VC*, III, §3, 82.1–19, tr. Cameron and Hall, 122, and 256 (commentary).
[856] *RIC* VII, 567, 572 (no. 19), 573, (no. 26), pl., xviii, no. 19.

to represent the defeat of paganism in general.[857] According to Bardill's detailed analysis, defeating a snake/dragon symbolized the act of salvation and Constantine the Great's adoption of the role of a saviour, emulating Christ. He further argued that the messianic role was to be accomplished under the guidance of the divine Logos-Nomos.[858] As with earlier parallels with Constantine the Great, this model seems to fit Emperor Constantine V; yet again, there is no evidence that this Eusebios' text was known in this period. On the other hand, the image, or indeed other images with a similar theme, were possibly still available, and we do have ninth-century testimonies claiming that Constantine the Great's coins were available, although the descriptions are either vague or seem unreliable.[859]

After Constantine the Great, the motif of an emperor triumphing over a snake, sometimes with a human head, became common in coinage during the fifth century, especially in the West, but completely disappears thereafter.[860] However, broader evidence testifies to a long-standing presence of the snake/dragon-slaying motif in the Eastern Mediterranean associated with magical practices. A holy rider spearing a demon or a snake, often identified as Solomon, was the most popular magical motif of late antiquity (figs. 26–7),[861] which developed out of the imperial model of the 'charging horseman'.[862] The evidence suggests that the warrior became Christianized by the sixth century. The motif was adopted by Christian saints in the period after,[863] preserving the apotropaic function. Numerous surviving seals and medallions dated to the period between the sixth and eighth centuries represent a saintly soldier spearing a snake, either riding a horse (fig. 28),[864] or on foot, most often representing St Theodore (fig. 29).[865] Moreover,

[857] See Leeb 1992, 43–52, and Malone 2009, 67–8. The latest treatment is Bardill 2012, 142–5, with additional references.
[858] Ibid., 126–50, esp. 137–45, and 359ff.
[859] In the early ninth century, Patriarch Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*. 520 B, states that: αὐτοί τε οἱ ναοὶ μέγα καὶ διαπρύσιον τὴν ἐκείνου βοῶντες ὀρθοδοξίαν, οὐδὲν δὲ ἧττον καὶ εἰσέτι καὶ νῦν διασωζόμενοι, τὸν πρὸς αὐτοῦ κεχαραγμένων νομισμάτων οἱ τύποι, 'the temples themselves proclaim loud and clear the orthodoxy of this man [i.e. Constantine the Great], no less the types of coins struck by him still preserved nowadays'. The late-ninth century version of the so-called *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, §5d, 21, tr. Munitiz et al., 20, includes a similar mention: 'as the first and foremost offering, a token of devotion to Christ our true God, he [Constantine the Great] engraved on the imperial coinage of the state the sign of salvation-bringing and life-giving cross that had appeared from heaven, and stamped the revered and theandric figure of Christ with his own image on the coin […]'. The problem is of course that Constantine the Great never included the cross on his coins, which raises a set of questions that cannot be pursued here.
[860] Demougeot 1986. Malone 2009, 67–8.
[861] Vikan 1984, esp. 79–83. Russell 1995, is particularly valuable study because the items were found in their domestic context, and not appearing as loose finds.
[862] Grabar 1936, 43–57. Malone 2009, 59–60.
[863] Walter 1989–1990.
[864] The seal belonged to one Theodosios who employed the figure of the holy rider piercing a snake on his seal dated between 550 and 650, *ZV*, no. 1315.
[865] The surviving seals of Peter, bishop of Euchaita are excellent examples of this practice. Besides well-preserved specimens, like DOSeals, IV, 45–6, no. 16.4a (fig. 29 here), there are two examples of larger size (33mm vs 23mm) and punctured (fig. 30), suggesting those could be worn as talismans. For numerous further examples, see Nesbitt 2003. The iconography of the foot soldier spearing a snake seems to also derive from the imperial models of the fifth century, Malone 2009, 67–8.

in the same period, we find identical iconography on silk appliqués (fig. 31),[866] which, Maguire argued, had the same magical function.[867] The evidence suggests that an image of a holy warrior killing a snake/dragon, on horseback or on foot, was strongly associated with the protection from evil in the Byzantine symbolic universe. While this does not come as a surprise, it is worth stressing the widespread presence of the motif, and its function as an apotropaic device, across the diverse levels of Byzantine society.

This notion is even more clearly displayed in hagiographical literature, which offers the richest literary material for comparison overall.[868] I will mainly be concerned with texts featuring comparable episodes, that is dragon encounters, that can reasonably be dated to have been created relatively close to the time of Constantine V, roughly corresponding to the dating of the visual material just discussed. An early example is found in the already mentioned *passio* of Marina of Antioch. Her cult existed in the East before the Arab conquest, and her *passio* is assumed to be not later than the seventh century.[869] While Marina was in her prison cell, a terrifying dragon came out of a hole in the ground caused by an earthquake; a long, tense scene follows, and the dragon eventually assaults and swallows the saint. Inside the belly of the beast, Marina prays, makes the sign of the cross, and the dragon is immediately cut from the inside, while the saint is unharmed.[870]

One of the most memorable miracles of the legendary fourth-century hieromartyr Hypatios, bishop of Gangra and wonderworker, was a high-profile encounter with a dragon.[871] The dating of several versions of Hypatios' *Life* and passions are not firmly established; Laniado proposed a sixth century dating for 'Vita II', that is considered to be the oldest surviving version.[872] The story goes that as a punishment for Emperor Constantius II's support for Arianism, a great dragon occupied the imperial treasury causing much terror, so the distressed emperor summoned Hypatios for help. Approaching the treasury alone, the saint used his rod surmounted by a cross to strike the dragon and take out the beast coiled around the staff; he ordered a great fire to be made at the Forum of Constantine where he burned the dragon (fig. 32).[873] Astounded by what he had

[866] See additional examples in Maguire 1996, figs. 108–10.
[867] Maguire 1996, 123–6, Maguire 1995, *passim*.
[868] The latest treatment of the dragon-slaying motif in the middle Byzantium is White 2008, who focuses on female examples and argues, in part based on analysing *metaphraseis*, that the dragon–fighting motif became particularly dominant in the tenth and eleventh century. I think her fine study would have profited from including more examples up to the ninth century, like St Ioannikios (d. 846, earliest *Life*, c. 847–52), as these show that dragon-fighting was already an important motif by the mid-ninth century. Further, as the examples below will demonstrate, gender of the protagonist determined certain aspects of the encounter; accordingly, including more male dragon-fighters allows for a slightly more nuanced interpretation.
[869] *Acta St Marinae*. Boulhol 1994, 260–1.
[870] *Acta St Marinae*, 24.21–27.15. See also White 2008, 157–63.
[871] Laniado 1997. *ODB,* II, 962, s.v. 'Hypatios'.
[872] Laniado 1997, 135–7. This version was edited by Ferri 1931, 75–87 (=*Life of Hypatios*).
[873] *Life of Hypatios*, 80–3. This scene is captured in the Menologion of Basil II, Vat. gr. 1613, 181v (fig. 32).

witnessed, the emperor placed an image of the holy man at the treasury as a ward, which is said to have kept the memory of Hypatios' wonder-work alive.[874] It is no surprise that the prominent place accorded to the icon of the saint is preserved also in the highly abbreviated synaxis for Hypatios in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* (14 November).[875] In fact, such narrative is suspect of iconophile rewriting, however, the scholars consider the text of the 'Vita II' to be considerably older than the ninth century.[876]

One of the miracles of St Theodore, the most venerated military saint at the time, recounts him killing a fearsome dragon near Euchaita, the city under his protection and the centre of his cult. This miracle is dated to the second half of the eighth century, that is, contemporary to Constantine V's lifetime.[877] The actual encounter with the dragon is not particularly exciting; as Theodore approached the place, the dragon creeps up at him, but the saint pierces the beast with his lance, sings thanksgiving hymns to the Lord, and the people were free to come to the place without fear.[878] As Auzépy correctly observed, the main focus of this miracle is the long dialogue between St Theodore and the noble woman Eusebia (i.e. 'piety'), on whose land the dragon was lurking, that leads to the encounter. Auzépy argues convincingly that this version of the miracle was processed by an iconoclast editor to fit iconoclast ideology, visible in Theodore's emphatic denouncement of idols and idolatry which agrees well with the *Horos* of Hiereia: 'I prefer to be devoured by this dragon rather than prostrate myself before mute and false idols and worship the creature rather than the creator'.[879]

In the mid-ninth century chronicle of George the Monk, an episode from the *Acts of Pope Sylvester* featuring a dragon encounter is inserted in the reign of Constantine the Great.[880] It is said that an immense (παμμεγέθης) dragon was lurking in the catacombs beneath a wide public space in Rome, terrorizing citizens with its breath, especially the children. A group of notable pagans approached Silvester asking him for help and prom-

[874] *Life of Hypatios*, 83, καὶ λοιπὸν εἶχεν ἔκτοτε ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ θεσαυροῦ τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν καθάπερ καὶ πρότερον, σφραγῖδα ἀσφαλείας καὶ φυλακῆς ἐπιθεὶς τῷ θησαυρῷ τὸν τίμιον χαρακτῆρα ἐν εἰκόνι γεγραμμένον τοῦ ἱεράρχου, ὅς καὶ μέχρι σήμερον ἀναλλοιώτως διεφυλάχθη εἰς μνήμην τοῦ θαύματος, χρόνου γῆρας οὐχ ὑπομείνας.
[875] *SynaxCP*, 223.
[876] See Laniado 1997, 135–7, with further references. It should be considered, however, that the only manuscript of 'Vita II', Rome, Bibl. Vitt. Em. cod. gr. 3, is dated to the eleventh/twelfth century, Ferri, 1931, 73–4.
[877] Established by Zuckerman 1988, who demonstrated that the author was an eyewitness of the Arab attack on Euchaita in 753. See also Walter 2003, who adduces further archaeological evidence of early testimonies of St Theodore's encounter with the dragon.
[878] Delehaye 1909, 189.29–190.6.
[879] Delehaye 1909, 189.18–20, αἱροῦμαι γὰρ ὑπὸ τούτου τοῦ δράκοντος καταποθῆναι ἢ προσκυνῆσαι τὰ ἀφανῆ καὶ κωφὰ εἴδωλα καὶ λατρεῦσαι τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα. See the full argument by Auzépy 2002, 93–6.
[880] Although the chronicle of George the Monk belongs to the early post-iconoclast period, it is included here because the *Acts of Silvester* are older, and may have been available as a model earlier. The *Acts* in Latin are confirmed to have existed in Constantinople in the late eighth century, but an earlier date has been argued, *ODB*, III, 1900, s.v. 'Silvester I'. It is not safely established when were the Acts translated into Greek, but Theophanes, 17–8, does include the baptism story in the reign of Constantine the Great.

ising that they would accept baptism if he freed them from the dragon. The pope descends into the catacombs, and finds a bronze door leading to the room where the dragon was residing. Sylvester invokes the name of Christ and shuts the door so that the dragon cannot escape anymore; as a result, the grateful, and persuaded, citizens come to be baptized en masse.[881] This story serves to introduce Pope Silvester as a wonderworker, and particularly as a baptizer: as it happens, the next episode describes the legendary baptism of Emperor Constantine himself.

We can see that, except for the more specific meanings that can be inferred occasionally, dragons generally represent a threat to the protagonist or the local community, that can be defeated only by champions of faith with divine aid. It is also clear that the dragon-fighter's gender and social role, in addition to narrative conventions, determined the specificities of the encounter, for example of how a protagonist defeated the beast. Although perhaps not surprising, it is striking that all male protagonists, regardless of their specific roles, are represented protecting and saving someone, be this the whole community, like Theodore (Euchaita) and Silvester (Rome), or the emperor and his court as in the case of Hypatios, while Marina of Antioch, as the sole female representative, has a more personal encounter. The same is true even if we look a bit later into the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople, to include two more female saints who encountered dragonesque beasts, the holy martyr Maria (12 July) and St Elisabeth the Wonderworker (24 April).[882]

The sample from the hagiographical literature of the period shows that a male hero fights a dragon to protect someone, which is in accord with the material evidence discussed above. We find a similar testimony in chapter 85 of the *Parastaseis*,[883] dedicated to the statue of Perseus and Andromeda that is said to have been located at the baths of Constantine.[884] The text claims that the statue came from Ikonion and relates an otherwise unknown version of the well-known myth of the etymology behind the city's name.[885] It is said that 'she [Andromeda] was given as a sacrifice to the dragon that lived there. For this was an ancient custom, for a young maiden to be offered to the

[881] *George the Monk*, 490.18–491.11. The dragon-encounter passage, and the mention of the bronze door, might be loosely based on Numbers 21:6–9, casting Silvester in the role of Moses. Further on importance of bronze for purification, see Fisher 1998, 88, n. 261.
[882] Maria, *SynaxCP*, 815–8, descends into a pit with a terrifying dragon, and manages to spend four months inside, even taming the dragon, so that the beast was resting on her. St Elisabeth, *SynaxCP*, 625–7, who will only in later iterations of her *Vita* become the saviour-of-the-community type of dragon-slayer, destroys a large serpent with the power of prayer, but, similarly to Maria, as a sequence that demonstrates her individual spiritual athleticism. See the detailed treatment of St Elisabeth in White 2008, 163–7, who also includes in her study an earlier example of Perpetua, ibid., 153–7, a third-century martyr, whose encounter with the dragon is also personal, and rather minimal.
[883] *Parastaseis*, §85, 160.13, 162.15, tr. Herrin and Cameron, 161, 163, (commentary) 274–6.
[884] In the Constantianai region, i.e. close to the Church of the Holy Apostles.
[885] Reported by Malalas, and copied by later authors. See Herrin and Cameron 1984, 274–5, and the following footnotes with references.

beast'.[886] Perseus, who had been passing by, heard the 'weeping Andromeda', and took to action. He used the Gorgon's head to kill the beast and save Andromeda and, according to this version of the story, the city of Ikonion as well: 'the city was called Iconium by Philodorus the *logistes* because Perseus came (ἡκέναι) and saved Andromeda, a bright stroke of luck for the city from the coming of Persus'.[887]

One of the major sources of myths about Perseus, including the founding and naming of Ikonion, is the Chronicle of John Malalas. In the context of Perseus' travels in Asia, the foundation myth is described:

> Finding a village known as Amandra, he made it a city, and outside the gates set up a statue of himself, carrying the image of the Gorgon. He made a sacrifice and named the *tyche* of the city Persis after himself. This statue stands there till present. He named the city Iconium because he had taken there the image (*icon*) of his first victory with the Gorgon.[888]

In between Malalas and the *Parastaseis*, the problematic and contested fragments of John of Antioch preserve a slightly different legend,[889] while the *Chronicon Paschale* quotes Malalas' version verbatim.[890] More interesting testimony is in George of Pisidia who made a reference to the Andromeda myth, praising Herakleios as surpassing Perseus by destroying the tyrant Phokas, described as the sea-monster (κῆτος):

> [Phokas] who thought he had the shedding of our blood on his thrice-unhappy power, the sea-monster of the earth, the face of the Gorgon. You [Herakleios] did not destroy him [Phokas] like the deceit of Perseus, but by placing against the corrupter of virgins the fearsome image of the pure Virgin. For you had her icon as a helper when you were approaching in the praying range of the beast. You killed him, having saved not only one fettered virgin, but entire cities.[891]

We can see that the *Parastaseis* relies on the previously established Ikonion myth, as transmitted in Malalas, but blends it with the Andromeda myth that resonates with lines from Gorge of Pisidia, thus providing a new etymology behind the name of the city.[892] Two details are relevant for the present purpose; a) in the *Parastaseis* version, the sea-monster becomes a dragon (δράκων);[893] and b) the 'Ikonion legend' is explained in association with the dragon-slaying feat, that is, the city derives its name in honour of Perseus as its *saviour*, not as its founder. This may hint that the *Parastaseis* picked up the

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[886] *Parastaseis*, §85, 160.13–17, tr. Herrin and Cameron, 161.
[887] *Parastaseis*, §85, 160.18, 162.6, tr. Herrin and Cameron, 161, 163, (commentary) 274–5.
[888] Malalas, II, 26.65–70, tr. Jeffreys et al., 18.
[889] John of Antioch, *Fragments*, ed. Roberto, 13, 2.8–10. However, these sections have been contested and, accordingly, excluded from the edition by Mariev 2008.
[890] *Chronicon Paschale*, 71.9–15.
[891] George of Pisidia, *Heraclias II*, 252, tr. Pentcheva 2002, 15.
[892] *Parastaseis*, Herrin and Cameron 1984, 275 (commentary).
[893] For the classical myth, see for example Hard 2004, 240–2.

motif emphasized by George of Pisidia, and may also have been affected by Constantine V's legend, depending on the dating of this section. In any case, we can conclude that at the time when this section of the *Parastaseis* was written down, the dragon represented *the* monster to be defeated. This episode also reveals the prevalent need for supernatural protection, which – as we have seen in Chapter One – became a considerable issue in Constantinople during the seventh and early eighth centuries.

The legend from the *Gesta* would have implicitly (and perhaps explicitly, too) glorified Emperor Constantine V as the protector and saviour of Constantinople; the preceding discussion of the motif leaves no doubt that its message would have been immediately understood by a wider audience. It was also a message consistent with the *Horos* of the council of Hiereia, that praised the emperor for bringing salvation. In view of the latter, the *Gesta*'s dragon legend may finally suggest that the emperor, like his model Constantine the Great, was emulating Christ, or contending with the saints. In his psogos against Constantine V, Nikephoros addresses the iconoclasts as follows: 'Here is your Christ and master, my persecutor and that of the Christians, rather the antithesis of Christ himself.'[894] In a Christian context, as mentioned, the slaying of a dragon was a property of Christ, and only through him or by his grace, secondarily of the saints, who were usually close to the populace and to whom supplications were addressed. Once the process of effacing the images of those very saints took place, however limited,[895] it left space for new representations more acceptable to the iconoclast point of view. Considering the popularity of the image of a holy warrior spearing a snake, and the fact that the motif was derived from the imperial models (some of which were likely still available in the capital), it is then possible to imagine Emperor Constantine V stepping into the role of the saint(s), which would have been also in accordance with the studied attempts to diminish the saints' power for intercession and direct the subjects to the official hierarchy.[896] Replacing the saints with an imperial figure would have also been another step of reasserting imperial authority.

Further evidence in support of this suggestion can be inferred from the later iconophile reaction. Dragon-slaying would become an increasingly popular motif in the post-Iconoclast period,[897] and the iconophile authors quickly picked up on this, if the example

[894] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 517 A: ταῦτα ὁ σὸς Χριστὸς καὶ διδάσκαλος, ὁ ἐμὸς διώκτης καὶ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀντίθετος.
[895] Agreeing in general with the overall assessment in the recent scholarship that the 'destruction' described in iconophile sources was much exaggerated, it should be kept in mind that we do have evidence that the iconoclast officials outside the capital adopted the aniconic course; see the example of the archbishop of Thessalonike, Oikonomides 1986, 46–7, no. 35.
[896] On these questions see Gero 1977, 143–51, and especially works of Auzépy 2001, ead. 2004b, and ead. 2008, 283–7. See also discussion by Auzépy 1981, 435–6, about the competition between Constantine V and St Stephen the Younger depicted in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*.
[897] White 2008.

of St Ioannikios (d. 846) is anything to judge by. Ioannikios who encountered five dragons and one large serpent according to the earliest *Vita* written by the monk Peter, became the undisputed dragon-slaying champion.[898] This earliest version is securely dated to the early post-Iconoclast period, possibly even while the patriarch Methodios was still alive,[899] who himself, curiously, showed an interest in the symbol of dragon, interpreting it as a spiritual evil in a brief commentary on the Passion of Marina of Antioch.[900] Whether there was a direct reaction to Constantine V's example is difficult to prove, but it seems teling that after Constantine V, no Byzantine emperor would ever again be represented as slaying a dragon. Auzépy's concluding comment that Constantine V was too hated a figure for this iconography to be allowed to repeat after 843 is certainly sensible,[901] but I believe there are further implications. First, it is worth considering if the disappearance of this motif had something to do with the undercurrents of imperial sainthood, if not equality with Christ, it evoked, which was certainly a taboo for the church.[902] Second, considering that after Iconoclasm the only figures fighting dragons would be the saints, what we can witness in the transition from the iconoclast to the post-iconoclast period is the last stage in the process of a firmer appropriation of the motif of dragon-slaying by the church, which symbolically meant that the latter monopolized the right and weapons to fight spiritual evil.[903] Already Anastasios of Sinai had formulated such a monopoly at the very end of the seventh century in the context of religious polemics:

> I say that only Christ's Church, the Church of Christians, is an enemy and is fighting against the serpent. All the rest in the world – the other religions and faiths of Gentiles, Jews, and heathens – are friends, comrades, spouses, and family of the diabolical serpent.[904]

Denying the imperial power the capacity of dragon-slaying implied on a metaphorical level to bar it from dealing with spiritual evil, and thus symbolized the limitation of imperial authority over church matters and, not least, curtailed potential associations of the imperial office with sainthood. [905]

In conclusion, the *Gesta*'s legend was comprised of ancient folklore motifs and, in line with Constantine V's reliance on popular support, clearly accessible to a wider audi-

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[898] *Life of St Ioannikios by Peter*, §§29, 37, 40, 46–8. On St Ioannikios, who became a highly popular and important figure during the restoration of orthodoxy, see Mango 1983, and the introduction to the English translation of the *Vita* by the monk Peter, Sullivan 1998, 243–53.
[899] See Sullivan 1998, 243–53.
[900] *Acta St Marinae*, 48–53.
[901] Auzépy 2002, 96.
[902] See Ch. 3, n. 1436.
[903] On 'censoring imagination' in Byzantium, see Dagron 1991, esp. 31.
[904] Anastasios of Sinai, *Hexaemeron*, XI.442–6; tr. Kuehn and Baggarly, 419.
[905] Dagron 2003, 158–91.

ence. The text portrays Constantine as an epic hero and extols his *andreia*, self-sacrifice, and probably his military resourcefulness too; ultimately, it represents the emperor as protector and saviour of Constantinople. The same motif of protection is advanced in the comparable dragon-encounters in Christian literature, and the evidence from the *Parastaseis* suggests that even the well-known classical myths were distorted in this direction. Moreover, the evidence advanced from visual material testifies that in the minds of the many, the image of a warrior killing a dragon meant protection from evil. The legend may further have been part of Constantine's proclamation of the re-founding of Constantinople, following the model of Constantine the Great. Lastly, whether intended or not, the extraordinary feat of defeating a dragon, the supernatural beast per se, inevitably invoked associations with Christ and sainthood.

Noble Death (Conclusions)

Constantine V died on 14 September 775, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, when he returned from what was to be his last campaign against the Bulgarians. Although the scene in Theophanes and Nikephoros' *Antirrhetikos III*, is modelled on a tyrant's death,[906] it is obvious from the versions surviving in the still unedited portion of Ps.-Symeon (copied by Kedrenos), that in its original form, the text presented the emperor as a pious ruler, saying farewell to the city of Constantinople and its most important churches, 'solicitous to the last for the welfare of his subjects', as Gero proposed. [907] We have no evidence that there was a funerary oration for Constantine, but if there had been one, the panegyrist would have had little trouble convincing his audience that the deceased ruler, for whom they were now mourning, excelled in every aspect traditionally associated with the best monarchs.

One of the most desirable traits for a Byzantine ruler was imperial triumph, and this was one of the best remembered qualities of Constantine V – a quality, in fact, with which he may have been associated from his birth. Constantine's well-advertised success on the battlefield, bringing bountiful loot and military glory, made him popular among the army, which remembered him as the 'mightiest', the one 'admired among the emperors', and an epic hero who wrestled with lions and slew a dragon. Constantine's memory among the army was transmitted orally, but, as the evidence explored in this chapter suggests, at least some of Constantine's achievements had also been recorded in a written form. Importantly, his victories were understood as a sign of divine favor; this

[906] Theophanes, 448. Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 505 B–508 A.
[907] For Ps.-Symeon's version, see Browning 1965, 408, and the translation by Mango and Scott 1997, 619–20, n. 3. Kedrenos, 770.25–771.38. See the discussion with further references in Gero 1977, 148–50 (quote at 150), and Treadgold 1984, with a slightly different focus.

will come to play an important role in the return to Iconoclasm discussed in the next chapter.

Especially in the early period of his reign, the emperor relied on the figure of his father Leo III for legitimacy. Constantine maintained the memory of Leo as the saviour of the city from the Arab siege, while at the same time expanding on Leo's legislative work and making Iconoclasm the religious doctrine of the empire. He was hailed as saving the people from the sin of idolatry: this messianic character present in Constantine's ideology may also have been inspired by that of his father. Between 740 and 747, the capital was devastated by earthquake, civil war and plague, but it was slowly revitalized thanks to the efforts of Constantine V and his administration, which laid down the foundations for the future development.[908] In the last twenty/twenty-five years of Constantine V's reign, citizens of Constantinople experienced a period of comparable stability and prosperity.[909]

Apart from the military triumphs, the most important trait that led to the belief that divine grace was with Constantine, and which also made him such an appealing imperial model, was his exceptionally long reign (34 years). Emperors reigning for longer than thirty years were extremely rare – Constantine was only the fifth in the c. 450 years of Byzantine history at the time, after Constantine the Great (32), Theodosius II (42), Justinian I (38), and Herakleios (31). Probably initially based on the ideal of Constantine the Great,[910] the number had acquired an almost magical property, as testified by the various oracles and prophecies of this period predicting the variants of thirty-plus years of reign to a ruler.[911] On a more practical side of things, Leo III and Constantine V together reigned for almost sixty years, which allowed for the record of their achievements to become deeply embedded in social memory. We may get a glimpse of what this meant from the statement of Hypatios of Nikaia, defending himself at the council of Nikaia in 787: 'we did not suffer violence nor were forced, but we were born, reared and grew up in this heresy of ours'.[912] Leaving aside the Iconoclast aspect, I think we can extrapolate that a full generation was 'born, reared, and grew up' in Constantinople during the reign of Constantine V, enjoying prosperity and the 'profound peace at land and at sea'. The combined achievements of Constantine's exceptionally long reign allowed the emperor

[908] Magdalino 2007a.
[909] That Constantine V left the imperial treasury in a healthy state is visible from Theophanes, 449, and it is seconded by the statistical analysis of the numismatic evidence, Füeg 2007, 170–1, figure 4.
[910] Bardill 2012, 363–4. Kraft 2012, 235, n. 115.
[911] In the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, the last roman emperor, whose name begins with kappa (§3), is predicted to reign for thirty-six years (§5). For different versions, see Kraft 2012, 235–9, and the summary at 245–9. Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 529 A, transmits the well-known legend that a Jewish magician was behind the beginning of Iconoclasm, who had promised to the caliph Yazid II, that he will reign for thirty years if he initiates the destruction of holy images. For different versions, see Gero 1973, 59–84, and the exhaustive treatment by Speck 1990.
[912] *ACO*, 84.28–30, tr. Price 2018, 127.

to lay claim to titles such as saviour and re-founder of the city, and of ‘New Constantine’ as well.

In short, it is not difficult to understand why Leo III and Constantine V remained popular in Constantinople for another two generations or so. Their overall success, especially in contrast with the reality of the period between 787 and 813, led to the belief that their theological position must have been correct too, and this played a crucial role in the return to Iconoclasm in 815. In other words, Leo III and Constantine V remained popular not because of the Iconoclast doctrine, but despite of it once religious policy had been reversed and Iconoclasm proclaimed a heresy. On the other hand, Constantine ruthlessly punished any challenge to his authority, and cleverly used public space, especially the Hippodrome, not only to advertise his triumphs, but also to make an example of his political opponents. In addition to alienating parts of the elite by executing, disabling and/or banishing a number of figures belonging to the highest ranks, it was Constantine’s position as the leading figure of Iconoclasm, and the extreme humiliation he inflicted on patriarchal and monastic dignity, that accounts for the vicious polemic against the emperor in the following (almost) one hundred years.

CHAPTER THREE

The contested legacies of Emperors Leo III and Constantine V (775–867)

Military unrest and the protracted crisis of legitimacy (780–813)

The period from the untimely death of Emperor Leo IV in 780 to the ascension of Emperor Leo V the Armenian in 813, is characterized by a protracted legitimacy crisis, tied in particular to the inability of rulers to command respect and authority among the army and reflected in a resurgence of military unrest.[913] This was in stark contrast with the reign of Constantine V, with no recorded instance of military unrest or disobedience during campaigns, and only two attempts against his reign altogether, although both were quite serious.[914] The poor military record of subsequent emperors is both a symptom of the issue, and the cause of its perpetuation. A good illustration of this situation is the fact that the only major victory after 778 was achieved against the rebelling army of the Armeniakon theme, and that only thanks to treachery.[915] Emperor Constantine VI even celebrated this victory with a triumph, humiliating a thousand members of the Armeniakon by tattooing their faces with the words 'Armeniac plotter'.[916] Despite the lack of any serious success, military triumphs were too important not to celebrate, as McCormick demonstrated in his seminal study, so Eirene organized one for Staurakios in 784 following 'spectacularly unsuccessful campaigns in Asia Minor', and an incursion into the Peloponnese a year after.[917] The Byzantines suffered a number of humiliating defeats in this period: at the hands of the Bulgarians near Markellai in 792;[918] the Arab raid of the imperial stables in 798 and the major incursion in 806;[919] and Nikephoros I's 811 disaster in Bulgaria.[920] Against the background of military defeats and ineffectiveness of

[913] On the military unrest in this period, see Kaegi 1981, 220–69, and specifically on the role of the *tagmata*, Haldon 1984, 338–53. Treadgold 1988, offers a useful historical synthesis, and for a more recent broad treatment see Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 248–365. For individual reigns, see on Leo IV, Speck 1978, 53–103, Rochow 1996, and PmbZ #4243; on Constantine VI, Speck's comprehensive study, Speck 1978, and PmbZ #3704; on Eirene, Lilie 1996, Herrin 2001, 51–129, and PmbZ #1439; on Nikephoros I, Niavis 1987, and *PmbZ* #5252; on Staurakios, PmbZ #6866; finally, on Michael I, PmbZ #4989.

[914] The mentioned usurpation of Artabasdos (741–3), who entered Constantinople on the pretext that Constantine was already dead, and the major plot in the mid-760s.

[915] In 778, the last significant military victory for several decades to come was achieved against the Arabs near Germanikeia, Theophanes, 451–2. The triumph celebrating this victory was organized outside the capital, at Sophianiai for the generals of the thematic armies, not for Emperor Leo IV (possibly related to the emperor's illness), again in contrast to his father Constantine V. See the analysis of this triumph in McCormick 1986, 137–41, who names this period the 'age of generals'.

[916] Theophanes, 467–9. McCormick 1986, 142–3.

[917] Theophanes, 456–7. Quote at McCormick 1986, 141.

[918] Theophanes, 467–8.

[919] Theophanes, 473, 482.

[920] Most recent treatments of this famous event, along with references to sources and earlier literature are Stephenson 2006, and Sophoulis 2011, 18–32, and chapters 5 and 6.

the army, the aforementioned lament of the two soldiers for Constantine V – 'Where is now that mightiest Constantine […] the glorious, the one admired among emperors?' – would indeed seem to fit, as Haldon proposed.[921]

Two 'cases' speak to the enduring political value and popularity of Emperor Constantine V and more broadly of Isaurian dynasty inside the capital: the failed attempt at reversing the Iconoclast policy in 786, and the altogether six plots in the names of Constantine V's other sons stretching over some thirty-six years (776–812).

Reversing the iconoclast policy under Eirene (786/7)

According to scholarly consensus, the main forces behind the termination of Iconoclasm were the empress Eirene and her patriarch, Tarasios – a layman and formerly head of the imperial chancery whom the empress appointed patriarch in 784.[922] The main motivation was probably political pragmatism by Eirene, i.e. to re-establish the unity of the Church and re-align Constantinople with other major centres, which was also an opportunity for the empress to strengthen her position.[923] However, the patriarch and the empress misjudged the situation in the capital, and the opposition was growing from the moment the plans for the synod had been announced. As the participants were arriving to Constantinople, it is said that:

> The majority of the bishops, steeped in the heresy of the accusers of Christians, plotted with some of the laity, numerous in number, to prevent the holding of a council and to maintain the censure and mistreatment of the venerable images, and stirred up not a few conspiracies and whispering campaigns against the patriarch, to the extent of holding rival meetings.[924]

On the eve of the synod, the soldiers of the *tagmata* voiced their opposition; the patriarch notified the emperors who were in Thrace, but the convocation of the synod continued as planned. The synod began on the next day, but it was quickly broken up by a mixed group of soldiers, clergy, and lay men.[925] As Brubaker and Haldon stress, it is important to note that it was not only the *tagmata* soldiers that participated in the breaking

[921] See ch. 2, subheading 'The creation of the *Tagmata*'.
[922] Auzépy 2008, 287–8; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 248–68; Price 2018, 51–3 On the patriarch Tarasios, see Afinogenov 1997, 11–38, and PmbZ #7235. Auzépy 2008, 277, provides an excellent summary of empress Eirene's difficulties ruling in the aftermath of great military emperors like Leo III and Constantine V, noting that electing an educated lay man to the position of the patriarch was one of several 'counter-measures' she attempted; this would prove to be a 'popular' precedent in the ninth century.
[923] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 260–6.
[924] *ACO*, 12.18–22; tr. Price 2018, 91. See also Theophanes, 461–2, and *Life of Tarasios*, §26, where the blame is lain almost exclusively on the soldiers of the *tagmata*.
[925] *ACO*, 12.22–14.27. Theophanes, 461–2. *Life of Tarasios*, §26.

up of the 786 attempt at terminating iconoclast policy, as claimed in later iconophile literature, but members of the laity too,[926] and, most importantly, at least ten bishops – seven of whom were of metropolitan rank – marked as ringleaders, who had drawn in a further greater number of suffragan bishops.[927] Employing trickery and blackmail, the empress managed relatively easily to dispose of the most troublesome members of the *tagmata*, yet, the new church synod, arranged for the next year, still had to be (consciously) moved to Nikaia, implying there were other reasons that had necessitated the move, as Whittow remarks.[928] It is telling that among the participants, there were almost no Constantinopolitan representatives, under the weak excuse that there were not enough vessels and beasts of burden to transfer them from the city.[929] Moreover, while the empress had dealt with the army, Tarasios managed to counter the episcopal opposition, as Auzépy notes, by inviting the monks, apparently a novel approach, and by proclaiming that the iconoclast bishops who made 'public admission of error' would be allowed to keep their posts.[930] This time, the synod was uninterrupted, and succeeded in terminating Iconoclast policy.[931] The council's decisions were pronounced in the Magnaura hall of the imperial palace complex in the capital to a selected group of representatives of the army, palatine corps, high-ranking officers, and the citizens.[932] The proclamation in the Magnaura, to the group of carefully selected representatives was quite different, and certainly less public, than the proclamation of the decisions of the Hiereia council at the Forum of Constantine in 754. The decisions were symbolically announced with the image of Christ erected at the Chalke gate, but we are not sure when this took place, the evidence from the Scriptor Incertus suggests it was during Eirene's sole reign (797–802).[933] All incidents put together demonstrate that the overall iconoclast legacy inside the capital was strong, and that a careful approach was necessary in order to push through the reversal of religious policy. As has been noted, in a letter from 791, the pope Hadrian informed the Frankish king that the empire (i.e. Byzantium) may return to Iconoclasm,[934] while the *Libri Carolini* speak about a civil war.[935] Brubaker and Haldon are certainly correct in pointing out vested interests as one of the primary motivations for

[926] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 269.
[927] The first session of the Nikaia II council in the following year dealt with these bishops as part of the general agenda of reconciliation with the previously iconoclast bishops. *ACO*, 18–110. See also Price 2018, 93–8, and esp. 95, n. 12, with a full list of bishops.
[928] *ACO*, 14.28–16.3. Theophanes, 462. Note also the testimony of Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 501 B, 'these criminals were driven out by a divine decree out of the city where they had established malice and godlessness among the masses'. Whittow 1996, 146.
[929] *ACO*, 780.27–782.1. See further Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 275, n. 114.
[930] Auzépy 2008, 288.
[931] See now the introduction in Price 2018, 24–53.
[932] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 276, note that the monks were excluded from this proclamation.
[933] *Scriptor Incertus*, 64.407–9. See the detailed discussion in Auzépy 1990.
[934] Speck 1978, 188–9, with references.
[935] Auzépy 2008, 288, n. 165, with references.

the opposition; fear that the reversal of policy would mean the loss of position and the concomitant privileges, or worse, was probably real for many.[936] This, however, does not diminish the evidence for enduring positive memory attached to Isaurian emperors, even if it was employed as a cloak for protecting personal interests. Moreover, we should also consider that a whole generation grew up knowing only of iconoclast doctrine; as stated by Hypatios of Nikaia, the former metropolitan and one of the bishops accused of taking part in breaking the synod in the Holy Aposltes: 'we did not suffer violence nor were forced, but we were born, reared and grew up in this heresy of ours'.[937]

The five 'other' sons of Constantine V and the six plots in their names (776–812)

One expression of legitimizing value of Constantine V's memory is reflected in numerous attempts to bring to the throne one of his five surviving sons from his third marriage with Eudokia.[938] Other, illegitimate, or sometimes invented sons of past rulers appearing in coup-attempts as carriers of legitimacy is not an uncommon phenomenon,[939] but the case of Constantine V's five sons is extraordinary, featuring an unprecedented six plot attempts against four different rulers (Leo IV, Constantine VI, Eirene, Michael I) over the course of thirty-six years (776–812).

In a ceremony on 2 April 769, Emperor Constantine V invested his other sons with imperial titles; the eldest, Christopher and Nikephoros, were made *kaisares*, while Niketas was proclaimed *nobelissimos*, and the same title was conferred upon Anthimos at an uncertain later date during Constantine's reign.[940] Speck argued that Constantine V aimed at establishing the succession for his son and grandson – the future Leo IV and Constantine VI – and securing an appanage for the other sons in hopes to prevent conflict, but these efforts did not prevent the plots.[941] Soon after his father's death, Emperor Leo IV took additional measures to ensure the succession of his young son through an extraordinarily public and elaborate oath-giving ceremony at the Hippodrome during the Holy Week that culminated with Constantine VI's coronation beginning at the Hippodrome and concluding in Hagia Sophia.[942] Very soon after this event, and possibly as a reaction to it, a plot against Leo IV formed involving the *kaisar* Nikephoros and 'certain

[936] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 262–3.
[937] *ACO*, 84.28–30, tr. Price 2018, 127.
[938] Five sons and one daughter of Constantine V and his third wife Eudokia were: Christopher (b. c. 753–6/7), PmbZ # 1101; Nikephoros (b. c. 756/7), PmbZ # 5267; Anthusa (b. 756/7), PmbZ #499; Niketas (b. 763) PmbZ #5403, Anthimos (b. 768/9), PmbZ #487; and Eudokimos (b. after 769) PmbZ # 1635. The sequence of Constantine V's sons is confirmed in an inscription, Mango and Ševčenko 1972, 384–93, which is also observed by Theophanes, 449–50. On Constantine V's family, see Mango 1982b, and Speck 2000.
[939] For example, a captive from Pergamon, who claimed to be Tiberios, son of Emperor Justinian II, Theophanes 411.
[940] Nikephoros, §87. Theophanes 443–4, 449–50.
[941] Speck 2000. On the possible additional trace of the intended appanage for the five sons, see Treadgold 1984.
[942] Theophanes 449–50.

spatharii, *stratores*, and other men in imperial service'.[943] The emperor convened a *silention* and made the plot public, to which, supposedly, people 'cried out that all of them should be removed'; the conspirators were scourged, tonsured and banished, while Nikephoros was punished comparably mildly, with the removal of his *kaisar* title.[944]

The second coup attempt in which the former *kaisar* Nikephoros was put forward as the candidate for the throne occurred very soon after Leo IV's death in October 780.[945] The plot involved several high-ranking current and former officials,[946] it failed, however, and the conspirators were scourged, tonsured and banished. Nikephoros and Constantine V's other sons were ordained as priests which was 'the gentlest possible means of making them ineligible for imperial office', and preventing them from marrying and having children.[947]

The next attempt took place in August 792, after the Emperor Constantine VI suffered a disastrous defeat against the Bulgarians at Markellai, when a number of prominent figures perished, most notably the *magistros* Michael Lachanodrakon, *strategos* of Thrace.[948] Theophanes reports that 'when the *tagmata* had assembled in the City, they decided to bring the former Caesar Nikephoros out of retirement and make him emperor'.[949] After Constantine VI had returned to the capital and learned about the plot, he summoned the brothers in the palace of St Mamas; he had Nikephoros blinded, the tongues of all the other brothers cut off, and it seems all five were sent to Therapeia for safeguarding.[950]

The fourth attempt occurred in October 797, roughly two months after Eirene had her son Constantine VI blinded and became the sole ruler. Theophanes states that 'some troublemakers persuaded the sons of God's enemy Constantine [V], who were confined to the palace of Therapeia, to seek refuge in the Great Church on the pretext of asking a guarantee of their future safety so as, by means of this excuse, to proclaim one of them emperor'.[951] The plan failed thanks to the *patrikios* Aetios, one of Empress Eirene's chief men, and the brothers were banished away from the capital to Athens for safekeeping

[943] Ibid., 450; tr. Mango and Scott, 621.
[944] Ibid., 450–1; tr. Mango and Scott, 621–2. The removal of the Kaisar's title is not stated directly, but in the next instance Nikephoros is referred to as the 'former Kaisar,' ibid., 454.
[945] Forty days after Eirene's accession according to Theophanes, 454.
[946] See the full list at Theophanes 454. It is noteworthy that among the conspirators was the *spatharios* Constantine, domestikos of the *excubitores*, PmbZ# 3826, Theophylaktos, son of Rangabe, father of the future emperor Michael I, PmbZ #8294, and the *patrikios* Bardas, former *strategos* of the Armeniakon (under Constantine V), PmbZ #779, possibly the father of the future emperor Leo V, if the conjecture advanced by Turner 1990b, 172–3, is correct.
[947] Theophanes 454. Quote from Treadgold 1988, 61.
[948] Theophanes 467–8; tr. Mango and Scott, 642–3. Michael Lachanodrakon, PmbZ #5027. More details about the battle can be found in the two *Lives* of St Ioannikios, see Mango 1983.
[949] Theophanes 468; tr. Mango and Scott, 643.
[950] Theophanes 468. The imprisonment is not explicitly stated, but this is where the five are said to have been kept when the next plot is related, see the following footnote.
[951] Theophanes 473; tr. Mango and Scott, 650.

under the watch of Empress Eirene's family.[952] The penultimate plot attempt occurred in March 799. It is unclear whether it had anything to do with the humiliating raid by the Arabs that occurred several months earlier,[953] but according to Theophanes, 'Akameros, chieftain of the Sklavinians of Velzetia, prompted by Helladics, planned to bring one of Constantine's sons out of confinement and appoint one of them emperor'.[954] The empress Eirene having learned of the plan, sent her cousin the *spatharios* Theophylaktos to Athens, who had all the sons blinded, and 'stamped out the plot against her'. [955]

Thirteen years later, the final attempt occurred in the summer of 812, in the heat of the 'Bulgarian crisis' when the iconoclasts began raising their voices,[956] and while the current emperor Michael I was away campaigning in Thrace. Constantine V's sons had been moved from Athens, probably after the Empress Eirene's deposition, because Theophanes relates that they were being kept under guard on the island of Panormos (one of the Princes' Islands).[957] This means that the authorities still paid attention to keep the last living male descendants of Constantine V close and under surveillance. This attempt failed, just like all the previous ones, but it is noteworthy that it was attempted at all. Theophanes connects this attempt with the iconoclasts, reporting that they planned to bring the sons 'in front of the army', and the plot involved the members of the *tagmata*, dismissed in the aftermath.[958] Theophanes also emphasizes, not without surprise, that 'blinded in their spirit, they desired that blind men should reign without God's assent, namely the sons of God's enemy Constantine [V]'.[959] Although Theophanes is exceptionally hostile to the Emperor Constantine V in general, I believe his surprise was genuine and in accordance with the cultural tenets – putting forward a blind man as a candidate for the throne was improbable to the extreme.

The context in which coup attempts occurred all seems to have taken place shortly after either transition of power (in 776, 780, and 797) or military defeats (in 792, and 812, and possibly also in 799). Among five plots in which we are informed about the agents, four involved the figures from the military, and three had the members of the *tagmata* as leaders (in 780, 792, and 812). This tendency is in line with the recognized

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[952] Ibid.
[953] Theophanes 473; tr. Mango and Scott, 651–2, n. 1.
[954] Theophanes 473–4; tr. Mango and Scott, 651.
[955] It seems obvious that the plot originated from among the officers of the Helladic theme, but it is unclear on what level. The role of Constantine Serantapechos (PmbZ #3870) – who was the relative of the Empress Eirene and father of the mentioned Theophylaktos, and probably the strategos of the Helladic theme – is not entirely clear, but it seems that Constantine, together with his son, helped to prevent the plot. See Mango and Scott, 651–2, n. 6; Treadgold 1988, 113–14. That being said, it should be noted that a member of this family, the *patrikios* Leo Serantapechos, later participated in the plot which deposed Eirene and brought Nikephoros I to the throne, Theophanes 476.
[956] On which see the following heading.
[957] Theophanes 496; tr. Mango and Scott, 679–81.
[958] Treadgold 1988, 181-2, n. 249.
[959] Theophanes 496; tr. Mango and Scott, 679.

crisis during this period, and the enduring popularity of Constantine V among the army; it seems likely that Constantine V's memory has been invoked as one of his surviving sons was being advanced as a contender for the throne. The punishments of the five sons aimed at making them ineligible to rule, but this was a slow, incremental process, from removal of the *kaisar* title to the blinding of all five, which shows a reluctance to take more drastic measures, meaning it was probably politically dangerous to do so. The supposedly huge apanage that Constantine V left for his sons may have played some role in this,[960] but in any case, there were certainly figures and/or groups interested in keeping the sons alive, for a variety of reasons. The sources allow us to name only one, but a significant figure, Theodotos Melissenos, nicknamed Kassiteras, the future Iconoclast patriarch Theodotos I (p. 815–21).[961] Theodotos was from the important family of the Melissenoi, and a relative of Emperor Constantine V.[962] His father *patrikios* Michael had been appointed *strategos* of the Anatolikon in 766 by the emperor Constantine V, and his mother was a sister of the *augusta* Eudokia, Constantine V's third wife.[963] In other words, Constantine V's five sons were Theodotos' cousins. This does not necessarily connect him with the plot in 812, but it is certainly noteworthy that only two years after this plot we find Theodotos in the group working on re-introducing Iconoclasm as official religious policy, who was also senate's choice for the patriarchal position in 815 (1 April).[964] Moreover, one of the first six of the so-called *Oracles of Leo*, composed by an Iconoclast author for Emperor Leo V (r. 813–20), seem to include a line in favor of the five sons.[965]

The five sons were a literal living memory of their father, and the extraordinary number of attempts to bring one of them to the throne, even away from the capital and after all had been blinded, serve as a testament to the enduring popularity and legitimizing quality of Emperor Constantine V. The memory of his many victories became only more pronounced as the Bulgarian threat peaked in the aftermath of Nikephoros I's disaster campaign in Bulgaria, and the plot attempt in 812 was just one in the series of incidents in which the 'iconoclast' voices became louder, to which I now turn.

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[960] Theophanes, 449. Kedrenos, 770–1. For the discussion on these sections, see Treadgold 1984.
[961] Pratsch 1999b; PmbZ #7954.
[962] *Scriptor Incertus*, 69–70.
[963] Theophanes, 440. PmbZ #5028.
[964] *Scriptor Incertus*, 70.
[965] It is said of Eirene that, *Oracles of Leo*, I.1, 56, Eng. tr. Brokkaar, 57, 'seemingly well-disposed, you raise young dogs […] Time, however, will reveal your reasoning and a serpent will quickly devour all of them'. Brokkaar 2002, 40-3, argued that the young dogs represent the sons of Constantine V, whom Eirene should have taken care of, but did not, and who were then devoured by the serpent, who is Constantine VI (depicted in the oracle as a flying serpent), referring to the plot in 792 when Constantine VI had Nikephoros blinded and the remaining brothers' tongues cut off.

The 'Bulgarian crisis' (811–813) and pro-Constantine V incidents in Constantinople

During the first decade of the ninth century, the Bulgarians led by the Khan Krum began successfully raiding in the Thracian territory, which prompted Emperor Nikephoros I (r. 802–11) to shift the focus and resources to the Balkans.[966] He continued the resettling policy in 807, when a large number of settlers were brought to Thrace, mainly from Asia Minor,[967] which culminated with the resettling of the thematic soldiers together with their families in late 809–early 810.[968] Like all the rulers since Constantine V, Nikephoros I had to face numerous incidents of unrest in the army,[969] so with the well-prepared campaign against the Bulgarians in the summer of 811, the emperor tried to address both issues.[970] The eventual disastrous defeat probably felt even heavier on the Byzantines as it came after the militarily and symbolically significant success of capturing and sacking the Bulgarian capital Pliska.[971] On their return from Pliska, the Byzantine army was ambushed; Emperor Nikephoros was killed, and his son Staurakios fatally wounded. The humiliating defeat was a serious blow to imperial prestige, and the consequences were felt across the Byzantine society. The Byzantines suffered considerable casualties, not only among the ordinary soldiers but also among the young members of Emperor Nikephoros' elite unit, and a political crisis ensued in the immediate aftermath.[972] Importantly, the Bulgarians gained the initiative and continued their operations in Thrace, forcing the recently settled population to leave, and a portion of these refugees at least fled to the capital,[973] which may have even caused the increased prices of grain.[974] The new emperor Michael I Rangabe, did little to turn the tides of the war, and the struggle for authority and even loyalty among the army continued.

Theophanes marks the period of Michael I's reign as the moment when the Iconoclasts became increasingly vociferous: '[the iconoclasts] began moving their tongues against the holy icons […] and to laud the abominable and thrice-miserable Constantine because (as those wretches impiously affirmed) he had won victories over the Bulgarians thanks to his piety'.[975] While the emperor was away, the last attempt of bringing one of Constantine V's sons to the throne took place – as mentioned, the plan was to bring

[966] Particularly disturbing was the capture of the Byzantine payroll, 1100 pounds of gold along with the baggage train, and not long after the capture of Serdica, with many soldiers and civilians perishing in the process, according to Theophanes 484–5. Sophoulis 2012, 180–92. Krum PmbZ #4164.
[967] Theophanes 482–3.
[968] Theophanes 486. Sophoulis 2012, 184–92.
[969] Kaegi 1981, 244–8.
[970] See the detailed treatment of the campaign in Sophoulis 2012, 192–216, and Stephenson 2006, focusing on the Byzantine texts treating the campaign.
[971] Sophoulis 2012, 202–5.
[972] Theophanes, 492–3.
[973] Theophanes, 498–9.
[974] Sophoulis 2012, 216, 238.
[975] Theophanes, 496.8–21; tr. Mango and Scott, 679.

them in front of the army.[976] At the same time, some kind of public statement in favor of Iconoclasm was staged. According to Theophanes, an unnamed figure designated as a 'pseudo-hermit' and 'fellow-magician' of Nicholas of Hexakionion, 'had scraped and dishonoured an icon of the all-holy Theotokos'.[977] Brubaker and Haldon claim that this was 'unlikely for anyone at all, whether an iconoclast or not', adding that the incident 'may well be an iconophile exaggeration or fabrication'.[978] In any case, it seems that Nicholas of Hexakionion was the spokesperson of the Iconoclast 'party', and probably acquired quite a following and influence through preaching in public against the icons in the period leading to the incident.[979] That the situation was becoming problematic, and perhaps Nicholas' influence spreading across the army, is further suggested by Theophanes who says that the emperor Michael addressed the army with 'some reasonable words about the faith',[980] and then returned to the capital where 'by a clever stratagem, [he] frightened the majority of conspirators by means of a few blows and exiled Constantine's blind sons to Aphousia'.[981] Although it is unclear what the 'clever stratagem' was, it is certainly noteworthy if the emperor had to resort to any such action. Finally, the emperor punished the iconoclasts; he had the members of the *tagmata* involved with the plot dismissed;[982] he had the tongue of the unnamed associate of Nicholas of Hexakionion cut off,[983] while the latter, after announcing his repentance, has been forced to 'confess his misdeeds in public' and secluded in a monastery 'with instructions that he should not lead an independent regimen'.[984] It would seem that the emperor had to further address the issue in public, and perhaps justify his actions; Theophanes says that Michael held a *silention* in the Magnaura where he 'addressed the people and set out the pious doctrines of his godly mind'.[985] We can see that the series of incidents was no minor disturbance and the manner in which the authorities handled the situation suggest a particular care to make sure that the iconoclast leaders were silenced and isolated, preventing the spread of their influence. Such approach is more understandable if the situation inside the capital was tense, as it seems to have been.

[976] See above, n. 957.
[977] Theophanes, 496–7; tr. Mango and Scott, 679–80.
[978] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 659, n. 118.
[979] Theophanes, 488–9.
[980] Theophanes is rather vague here, but we may presume that the emperor asserted orthodoxy in accordance with the decisions of 787 council in Nikaia.
[981] Theophanes, 496; tr. Mango and Scott, 679–80.
[982] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 492 A–493 B, and id., *Apologeticus maior*, 556 B–D. For the discussion, see Haldon 1984, 326, 345, and Treadgold 1988, 181–2, n. 249, against the conjecture of Alexander 1958, 111–25.
[983] In the Ekloge, 17.2, ed. Burgmann, cutting of tongue was the punishment prescribed only for perjury; we may assume the idea was to convey the meaning of this person making false claims, but also to permanently 'silence' him.
[984] Theophanes, 496–7; tr. Mango and Scott, 680.
[985] Theophanes, 497; tr. Mango and Scott, 680.

The following spring (813), Michael I levied the thematic armies of Asia in an attempt to stop the onslaught of the Bulgarians, who had captured Mesembria at the beginning of November.[986] With the emperor away, a total eclipse of the sun occurred at sunrise on 4 May, and 'great fear fell on the people'.[987] While the Bulgarian and Byzantine armies were camping close to Versinikia,[988] in the capital, the patriarch was performing a litany in the church of the Holy Apostles with a 'throng' of people participating. Theophanes, our only source for the incident, relates that:

> In the City, while the people and the patriarch were performing a litany in the church of the Holy Apostles, some impious members of the foul heresy of the God-hated Constantine prised up the door of the imperial mausoleum (no one was paying any attention because the throng was so thick) and made it open suddenly with some kind of noise as if by a divine miracle. They then rushed in and fell before the deceiver's tomb, calling on him and not on God, crying out, 'Arise and help the State that is perishing!' They spread the rumour that Constantine had arisen on his horse and was setting out to fight the Bulgarians – he who dwells in Hell in the company of demons![989]

The scene of the patriarch performing a litany with a multitude of people participating is strongly reminiscent of the sieges that the city had withstood in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries,[990] and it is noteworthy that several scholars thought that the incident indeed occurred during a siege.[991] While this was not (yet) the case, the action indicates that the situation was felt to be dire enough to impel the patriarch to perform a supplication litany. With the memories of the 811 disaster and further defeats quite fresh, the consequences tangible, and in view of a series of bad omens, it is understandable that the apprehension in the city was high.

The 'impious members of the foul heresy' are safely identified as the veterans of the *tagmata* dismissed by the emperor Michael a year before.[992] The setting was in many ways conducive for staging of the described incident: the dire atmosphere, a large audience, and of course the presence of the imperial tomb(s).[993] The action of the soldiers seems to affirm that the litany was supposed to perform supplications for the campaigning emperor, and probably more generally for the salvation of the Romans. The soldiers

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[986] Theophanes, 499–500.
[987] Theophanes, 500; tr. Mango and Scott, 684. Indeed, a total solar eclipse occurred on 4 May at 5 am, lasting for three and a half minutes.
[988] On the Battle at Versinikia, see Theophanes, 500–1, and in much more details, *Scriptor Incertus*, 39–44, who were sources for the later chroniclers. The best discussion is in Turner 1990b, 187ff; Treadgold 1988, 185–9, arrives at different conclusions. See also Sophoulis 2012, 236–45.
[989] Theophanes, 501.3–12; tr. Mango and Scott, 684.
[990] See Ch. 1, 25-6.
[991] For example, McCormick 1986, 137, and more recently, Longo 2012, 226.
[992] See above, 982.
[993] Although we have no direct proof for it, it is justified to consider that the incident may not have been an ad hoc affair, which would imply contemplation and planning.

used this sensation and redirected the attention and the supplication prayers towards their champion with the cry 'rise and help the polity that is perishing' (ἀνάστηθι, καὶ βοήθησον τῇ πολιτείᾳ ἀπολλυμένῃ), which stresses the aspect of *presbeia*.[994] Besides invoking the memory of Constantine V's victories over the Bulgarians, the whole incident – especially the 'stratagem' to make the door appear as opened by divine act, the soldiers' cry, ἀνάστηθι, and the rumour they spread that 'Constantine had arisen on his horse and was setting out to fight the Bulgarians',[995] all in the context of siege-like danger – might have been related to the last roman emperor motif.[996] The motif was ubiquitous in highly popular – in both senses of the term – apocalyptic literature, appearing already in the immensely influential *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodios, and it was quickly adapted for distinctly Constantinopolitan setting; in fact, the pronounced focus on Constantinople led scholars to conclude that the majority of these texts was produced in the capital for its citizens as the primary audience.[997] Moreover, only a couple of years after the tomb incident, a set of oracles would be composed for the new emperor Leo V, featuring the motif of the last Roman emperor (Leo V in this case) awakening from death.[998] It is thus justified to assume that the motif was well-known in the capital at the time, and it seems likely that the staging of this public *presbeia*, as described by Theophanes, was likely to recall the motif at least among some that were present – it is telling that the authorities forced the culprits to publicly proclaim that this was only a stratagem. I believe that in the given circumstances, Emperor Constantine V could have been seen as the model of a savior and fit the description of the last Roman emperor in the popular imagination.

In conclusion, the incident was a highly public statement in which the figure of the late Emperor Constantine V had been attributed with supernatural and intercessional qualities, whether in a guise of a saviour-emperor from apocalyptic literature, or perhaps of a military saint; either way, those were the qualities normally applying to those of saintly status.[999] It is telling that Theophanes draws the distinction that the soldiers were calling on Constantine, 'and not on God',[1000] and, in the concluding lines of this section, deplores that the iconoclasts were 'extolling the Jewish-minded Constantine as a

[994] Theophanes, 501.10–11; tr. Mango and Scott, 684.
[995] Theophanes, 501; tr. Mango and Scott, 684.
[996] See Ch. 1, *Defending the city: Leo III as the Last Roman Emperor?*. I am grateful to Christopher Bonura who proposed to me that the incident might be connected with the last roman emperor motif after my presentation at Dumbarton Oaks. Bonura is preparing a PhD thesis on the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios at the University of California, Berkeley.
[997] Dagron 1984, 328; Kraft 2012, 251.
[998] *Oracles of Leo*, 64–5, and Brokkaar 2002, 36–7.
[999] Auzépy 2008, 288, notes in her excellent survey that the iconoclasts 'stopped short of considering Constantine V a saint', but it seems this tendency was very much in the air. See further Ch. 3, *Disinterment of Constantine V*.
[1000] See the same objection by Nikephoros, *Antirrhetik*os *III*, 493 B, 'they [i.e. the Iconoclasts] do not render thanks to God'.

prophet and a victor'.[1001] Similarly, in the opening section of his *Antirrhetikoi* against Constantine V, Nikephoros states that the iconoclasts treat Constantine with divine-like honours;[1002] although his works are vehement polemic against Constantine, Nikephoros' testimony is, however, important to keep in mind as he was an eyewitness of the incident in the Holy Apostles, and refers to these soldiers in his polemics.[1003]

The response from the authorities was similar to the earlier case involving Nicholas of Hexakionion. Theophanes relates that:

> The City prefect arrested those men and at first they lied, pretending that the doors of the mausoleum had opened automatically by God's will. But when they had been brought before the prefect's tribunal and failed to produce witnesses, they admitted the stratagem of the wrenching before any torture had been applied to them.[1004] The prefect had them suitably 'wrenched' and condemned them to be paraded in public and to cry aloud the reason for their punishment. Thus had the Devil, inventor of evil, trained the soldiers to lay blame not on their own sins, but on the orthodox faith that has been handed down by our fathers and on the monastic rule, the school of godly philosophy. Most of those who uttered such blasphemies were Christians only in semblance, but in truth were Paulicians who, unable to make manifest of their own loathsome doctrines, seduced the ignorant by this device, extolling the Jewish-minded Constantine as a prophet and a victor and embracing his impiety so as to subvert the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.[1005]

We can see that the focus was on making the culprits publicly confess and announce their crimes as in 812 with Nicholas of Hexakionion. Specifically, the authorities wanted to make public and clear that the door of the mausoleum had not opened by some divine act –presumably to prevent the more credulous citizens being affected.[1006] We can consider that Theophanes, a contemporary writing for contemporary audience, is basically doing something similar in his text, denouncing both Constantine V and the soldiers involved with the incident by stressing that Constantine 'dwells in Hell in the company of demons!', and marking those who 'call on him and not on God' as 'Christians only in semblance, but in truth […] Paulicians'.[1007] This statement should be seen in the context of the contemporary debate over the death penalty to be inflicted on the here-

[1001] Theophanes, 501; tr. Mango and Scott, 685.
[1002] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos I*, 209A: ἐκεῖνον δὲ ταῖς ἰσοθέοις καθ' Ἕλληνας γεραίρουσι τιμαῖς, τῇ τε δόξῃ τῇ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ φρονήματι προστρέχοντες ἀφρονέστατα, ὡς οἰκεῖον περιπτύσσονται καὶ ἀσπάζονται. See also Alexander 1958, 170.
[1003] See for example, Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 492 A–B.
[1004] The statement that the soldiers admitted their crime 'before any torture had been applied to them', is somewhat suspicious; one wonders whether this emphasis was to make the soldiers look weak, or perhaps conceals that they were in fact tortured? Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 492 B, ridicules the veteran soldiers being too weak to carry their weapons.
[1005] Theophanes, 501; tr. Mango and Scott, 684–5.
[1006] Treadgold 1988, 187.
[1007] Theophanes, 501; tr. Mango and Scott, 684.

tics. To this effect, Emperor Michael I issued a decree which was supported by the patriarch Nikephoros and Theophanes, while Theodore of Stoudios was in opposition.[1008] That Theophanes' statement concerning the soldiers might have had a deliberate judicial undertone can be inferred from an earlier reference. In his 'tirade' against Emperor Nikephoros I, Theophanes proclaims that 'the emperor was an ardent friend of the Manichees (now called Paulicians) and of his close neighbours, the Athinganoi of Phrygia and Lykonia […]. Those heretics were given leave during his reign *to enjoy the rights of citizenship* without fear [my italics, I.M.]'.[1009] Moreover, Theophanes praised Michael I's imposition of the death penalty against the heretics: 'moved by an excess of divine zeal, the most pious emperor, at the instigation of the most holy patriarch Nikephoros and other pious persons, decreed the death penalty against the Manichees (that is the Paulicians of today) and the Anthinganoi',[1010] and polemicized against the Stoudite's rejection of the decision, adding that despite the opposition, 'the pious emperor Michael executed not a few of those heretics'.[1011] With such attitudes advanced in the text, it is valid to ask if the inference from his comment was that the iconoclasts also deserved the death penalty?

As we have seen, the approximately twelve months between summer of 812 and 813 saw increased action by the partisans of the Isaurian dynasty and iconoclast religious policy, and the support was much broader than the iconophile sources suggest.[1012] From the *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, we hear that the heresy against icons was spreading in the capital in this period, and Pratsch argued that this included members of the lower clergy.[1013] We hear more about the iconoclast supporters from the patriarch Nikephoros, who, besides the former members of the *tagmata*, also mentions:

> the dignitaries from among the circus factions in the demes, as was fitting for this disorderly crew […] As is usual in such cases of disorder and confusion, even a part of the Church is being corrupted […] the leaders of the theatrical spectacles and of the stage, whom we are accustomed to call mimes in vernacular speech […] they even invited some of the traders, men from the street corners and the brothels, to lend a hand in their undertakings, and in starting riots they assemble the whole crowd of beggars, the rabble and the vulgar.[1014]

[1008] Theophanes, 494–5; *Life of Nikephoros*, 158–9. On the issue, see Alexander 1977, and Ludwig 1998, esp. 31–3.
[1009] Theophanes, 488; tr. Mango and Scott, 671.
[1010] Theophanes, 494–5; tr. Mango and Scott, 678.
[1011] Theophanes, 495; tr. Mango and Scott, 678.
[1012] As demonstrated by Alexander 1958, 111–25, and Pratsch 1998, 208–13.
[1013] *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §§24–25. For the dating and interpretation, Pratsch 1998, 211.
[1014] Nikephoros, *Apologeticus maior*, 556 A–D; tr. and commentary Alexander 1958, 114–17.

The patriarch is sure to portray every group appropriately negative, or to provide a justification for the corruption in the Church, but the overall impression is that the support was widespread, including the lower social ranks. Alexander further noted the detail from Nikephoros' *Contra Eusebium et Epiphanidem*, that underlines the sensation of a popular movement against the icon-worship: 'From this we learn that his present disciples, out of same rudeness, call out with unruliness and unseemliness: *Let the bones of the icons be exhumed!*, for this is literally what they uttered'.[1015] Alexander stressed that this phrase had the 'definite flavour of popular revolution', exemplified during Emperor Justinian II's deposition in 695.[1016] Such had been the atmosphere in the capital when the *strategos* of the Anatolikon, Leo the Armenian, was received and crowned as the new emperor Leo V.

Return to Iconoclasm (813/15–842)

Leo V emulating the 'famous' Isaurians

The major event concerning internal policy under Leo V's reign was the return to Iconoclasm, initiated in mid-814 and completed in April 815. Although this topic received considerable scholarly attention, it will be necessary to repeat some of the conclusions.[1017] For the time being, it should be stressed that more recent scholarship considers that Leo was not a 'hidden iconoclast' from the very beginning, but that it was rather the combined effect of the circumstances at the time that eventually led to revival of Iconoclasm: the devastating Bulgarian war and need to reverse the military fortunes; partisanship in favour of Iconoclasm within the capital resting on a broader support; necessity for Leo to establish his legitimacy; and the prestige of the Isaurian rulers Leo III and Constantine V, especially the connection between Iconoclasm and the divine grace granting imperial victories.[1018]

As any new emperor, Leo V needed to secure his position, especially since he was a relative newcomer. The burning issue, however, was the Bulgarian war. In the same sentence that relates Leo's coronation, Theophanes reports that the emperor 'ordered the city to be placed in a state of defence' – giving the sense of urgency, as if this was Leo's very first act as the emperor.[1019] The chronicler adds that Leo 'toured the walls by

[1015] Alexander 1958, 125, with reference and translation.
[1016] Ibid., 125. Theophanes, 369.
[1017] See especially Alexander 1953, and id. 1958, 111–47; Pratsch 1998, 203–34; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 366–85, with detailed references; and most recently, Signes Codoñer 2014, 13–25.
[1018] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 366–8; Signes Codoñer 2014, 14–17. For an opinion that Leo was an Iconoclast in hiding, see Treadgold 1988, 207–14.
[1019] Theophanes 502–3; tr. Mango and Scott, 686. Turner 1990, 187–201. See also Kaegi 1981, 254–61, on the role of the thematic armies in Leo V's ascension.

day and night', encouraging everyone.[1020] Less than a week after Leo V's coronation, Krum's army was encamped in front of the capital.[1021] It must have been obvious to everyone, however, that Krum had no means to lay a siege; instead, he aimed at a more psychological pressure, parading his army along the walls and performing a series of intimidating rituals in view of the Byzantines.[1022] Emperor Leo and his advisers assessed that Krum's death would be enough to disrupt the Bulgarian polity,[1023] so an assassination attempt was planned to occur during peace negotiations. The attempt failed, with Krum escaping, perhaps only with a flesh wound,[1024] although the soldiers at the walls are reported to have shouted 'the cross has triumphed!' (ὁ σταυρὸς ἐνίκησεν),[1025] revealing the belief in the victory-giving power of the cross. Enraged after this devious attempt, the khan thoroughly pillaged the surrounding area, including the imperial complex of St Mamas, and continued retaliatory operations in Thrace in the following months, among which the capture of Adrianoupolis was particularly devastating, involving the transportation of a large number of citizens across the Danube.[1026] The war with the Bulgarians remained a major issue,[1027] and Khan Krum had already acquired a notorious reputation among the Byzantines, especially following Nikephoros I's disaster in 811, when, according to the legend present at the time, Krum turned the emperor's scull into a drinking cup.[1028] Affected by the brief siege in June 813, Theophanes calls Krum the 'New Sennacherib' (ὁ δὲ νέος Σενναχερὶμ Κροῦμμος), while the *Scriptor Incertus*, refers to him as 'the notorious Krum, who wanted to seize the city' (ὁ Κροῦμμος ὁ περίφημος, ὁ τὴν πόλιν ἑλεῖν βουλόμενος).[1029] The latter statement might suggest the lasting effects of Krum's short presence and actions in front of the capital, but it may also be reflecting Krum's supposedly massive preparations to more seriously besiege Constantinople in the spring of 814, as reported by the *Scriptor*.[1030] The degree of preparations is likely exaggerated, as Sophoulis notes, but the report was nevertheless taken very seriously by the Byzantines.[1031] Emperor Leo ordered the building of a high wall and a large ditch in

[1020] Theophanes 502–3; tr. Mango and Scott, 686.
[1021] Turner 1990, 187–201.
[1022] Theophanes, 503, and with more details in *Scriptor Incertus*, 50–1, summarized by Treadgold 1988, 200.
[1023] Which, in hindsight, seems to have been a correct assessment, as the thirty-years peace between the two polities was struck less than two years after Krum's death.
[1024] Theophanes, 503. *Scriptor Incertus*, 51–2, offers the most detailed account of the unsuccessful assassination. Treadgold 1988, 201.
[1025] *Scriptor Incertus*, 52.88.
[1026] Ibid., 53–5, again provides much more details, than Theophanes, 503. Sophoulis 2012, 249–57.
[1027] Besides reintroduction of Iconoclasm, the war with Bulgaria is the only other major theme in the *Scriptor Incertus*, for example. See Sophoulis 2012, 249–86, for the treatment of military operations and the effects of war in Thrace until the thirty-year peace signed in 816.
[1028] Reported by Theophanes, 491. Scholars nowadays consider the story to be only a legend, but the Byzantines may have believed it, and it in any case shows the sense of dread associated with Krum in Byzantine imagination. See most recently Nikolov 2009, with previous literature, who argues against the historicity of the story.
[1029] Theophanes, 503.5–6. *Scriptor Incertus*, 57.222–58.223.
[1030] *Scriptor Incertus*, 56–7.
[1031] Sophoulis 2012, 260–1.

front of Blachernai,[1032] but he also initiated diplomatic actions. Sophoulis argued that Leo had attempted a rapprochement with Krum before the works on the fortifications have began; moreover, the emperor sent an embassy to the Franks, asking for aid in fighting the Bulgarians.[1033] With increased anxiety in expectation of a major siege, Krum's sudden death in April 814 was considered a divine miracle by the Byzantines.[1034] That Krum was widely perceived as a major threat is implied by the imperial proclamations sent across the empire after his death,[1035] partially reported by the *Scriptor*:

> Leo, exalted in his arrogance, as if he himself, and not God, had stricken the enemy, sent *sacra* [imperial letters] to all the towns and villages proclaiming that: *I found that the Bulgarians were close to the city, and having shot their leader with my prudence, andreia and leadership I put all the others to flight, and for this reason* – he said – *our enemy perishes*.[1036]

This was a convenient piece of propaganda in which the emperor praised himself for his virtues and the effectively unsuccessful assassination attempt from July 813 is given credit for Krum's eventual death. Such promotion agrees with the information from the scarce contemporary evidence in favour of Leo V and Iconoclasm. In the oracles composed for Leo, the emperor is addressed as the 'mightiest' (κράτιστε) ruler and is said to 'possess the cardinal virtues more than others do'.[1037] In the text transmitted by Michael the Syrian,[1038] Leo is described coming back from the Versinikia battle (22 June 813) as the victor over the Bulgarians, and invested with the imperial crown by his predecessor, Emperor Michael I. The narrative presents an emphatic link between triumph and legitimacy through Michael's supposed address to Leo: '« Reçois l'empire dont tu es digne », et il fléchit le genou devant lui et le vénéra; il ajouta et dit : « Tant que tu brilleras ainsi par la victoire, la couronne t'appartient. » Cela plut aux Romains, et Léon prit place sur le trône impérial'.[1039] It is clear from the surviving texts that Leo built his legitimacy,

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[1032] Scriptor Incertus, 57.
[1033] Sophoulis 2012, 262–3.
[1034] *Scriptor Incertus*, 57–8. Sophoulis 2012, 263–4.
[1035] *Scriptor Incertus*, 57–8.
[1036] Ibid., 58.228–35, ἐπαρθεὶς τοίνυν τῷ φρονήματι ὁ Λέων, ὡς ὅτι αὐτὸς κατέβαλεν τὸν πολέμιον, καὶ οὐχ ὁ θεός, ἔπεμψεν εἰς πάσας τὰς πόλεις καὶ χώρας σάκρας, ἀναγγέλλων ὅτι 'εὗρον τοὺς Βουλγάρους ἐγγὺς ὄντας τῆς πόλεως, καὶ διὰ τῆς φρονήσεως καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀγωγῆς μου τοξεύσας τὸν πρῶτον αὐτῶν πάντας ἀπήλασα, ὅστις καὶ διὰ τὴν πρὸφασιν ταύτην ἀποθνήσκει, ἔφη, ὁ ἐχθρὸς ἡμῶν'.
[1037] *Oracles of Leo*, 64, tr. Brokkaar, 65.
[1038] Michael the Syrian takes his account from Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, written in the first half of the ninth century (815–845), Gero 1976, 3.
[1039] Michael Syr., III.12.15, Fr. tr. Chabot, 70–1.

among other aspects, as a victorious ruler, successfully ending the Bulgarian war,[1040] which was in stark contrast to his predecessor(s).[1041]

With the evidence of anxiety concerning the war with Bulgaria, and the memory of Constantine V 'smiting Bulgaria' invoked in a highly public event, it is not a surprise that the first public statement towards emulating the Isaurian emperors by Leo V occurred while Krum was still a major threat, with hopes, the context seems to suggest, of reversing the military fortunes.[1042] Leo renamed his son Symbatios as Constantine on his coronation, performed by the patriarch Nikephoros on Christmas 813.[1043] The *Scriptor* relates that Leo gathered the surviving soldiers, distributed *rhoga*, and made them 'acclaim Leo and Constantine, imitating the Isaurians Leo and Constantine, who had reigned before, of whom he also renewed heresy, since he wanted to live many years and be famous like them'.[1044] Although it can be inferred from other sources, it is worth stressing a direct statement by the *Scriptor*, that Leo III and Constantine V were famous at the time.

The initial stage of reintroducing Iconoclasm also seems to be tied to the victory over the Bulgarians. Following Krum's death, the Byzantines achieved a victory near Mesembria later in 814,[1045] and the *Scriptor* reports that the emperor used this momentum to initiate the campaign for the reintroduction of Iconoclasm, placing in Leo's mouth the following speech:

> Why are Christians, he said, in these conditions, dominated by other peoples? It seems to me that this happens because they venerate the images and nothing else, and I want to destroy them [the images]. You see, in fact, he said, that many emperors that had accepted and venerated them, they died, some driven away, others fallen in war. Only those who did not venerate them each died of natural

[1040] Following Krum's death, the Byzantines managed to achieve several important victories, and in 816, the two polities agreed to a thirty-year peace treaty, Sophoulis 2012, 265–86.
[1041] As stressed in the speech imputed to Leo V in the *Scriptor Incertus*, see below, n. 1046.
[1042] Signes Codoñer 2014, 18.
[1043] *Scriptor Incertus*, 55.154–65. Genesios, I.21. *Brussels Chronicle*, 32.32–33.2, is the only testimony that mentions patriarch Nikephoros performing the coronation. That the *Scriptor* avoids to mention the patriarch is a common practice of the iconophile authors, who always attempt to dissociate icnonophile patriarchs from the Iconoclast emperors especially in cases involving the intercessory role, i.e., the investment of power. For example, Theophanes, 397-8, 401, omits that the patriarch Germanos performed the coronation of the emperor Leo III or of his son Constantine V. In case when a testimony of an iconophile patriarch performing an act of divine consecration on an iconoclast emperor is preserved, the narrative usually presents the patriarch as discovering a sign of the Satan and making a prophecy, as in the mentioned (ch. 2) case of Constantine V's baptism, or the coronation of Emperor Leo V preserved in the *Life of Nikephoros*, 164.8–19, tr. Fisher, 73, where it is stated that 'when it was time to touch the head of <Leo V> for consecration, the saint seemed to press his hand into thorns and thistles, and let go of the crown with the claim that he distinctly felt pain. For that head, that pricked like a thorn at the saint's touch, foretold <Leo's> egregiously harsh and unlawful treatment of the Church, which was about to erupt'.
[1044] *Scriptor Incertus*, 55.154–65, Καὶ λοιπὸν φθασάντων τῶν ἑορτῶν <τῶν Χριστοῦ γεννῶν> ἔστεψεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ μικρὸν ὄντα, καὶ ἐπονομαζόμενον Συμβάτην ἐψεύσατο λέγων ὅτι Κωνσταντῖνος καλεῖται. Καὶ σωρεύσας τὸν περισωθέντα λαὸν ἐκ τῶν διαφόρων πόλεων ἐρόγευσεν αὐτούς, ποιήσας αὐτοὺς εὐφημῆσαι Λέοντα καὶ Κωνσταντῖνον, μιμούμενοσ τοὺς πρώην βασιλεύσαντα Λέοντα καὶ Κωνσταντῖνον τοὺς Ἰσαύρους, ὧν καὶ τὴν αἵρεσιν ἀνενεώσατο, βουλόμενος ζῆσαι ἔτη πολλά, ὡς καὶ αὐτοί, καὶ γενέσθαι περίφημος.
[1045] This victory is suppressed by the *Scriptor Incertus*, who is otherwise very well informed and provides the most detailed Byzantine account on the war, Sophoulis 2012, 27.

> death in their palace and, accompanied with honours into the cemeteries of the emperors, were buried in the [Church of the Holy] Apostles. Therefore, I also want to imitate them and destroy the images, so that I too and my son live long and our *basileia* is strong in the fourth and fifth generation.[1046]

Although the text is polemical, scholars note that the consideration expressed does not seem implausible;[1047] indeed all recent iconophile rulers, especially Nikephoros I and Michael I, suffered catastrophic defeats on the battlefield, and a similar message was expressed in the pro-Iconoclast *Oracles of Leo*, where it is said that Michael's reign had been shortened by two thirds because he had 'erected temples for idols'.[1048] It is further interesting to note that first, the *Scriptor* singles out yet again Leo V's wish for a long reign, consistently appearing in iconophile sources,[1049] and, second, the mention of an honorable burial in the church of the Holy Apostles. The latter detail may suggest a connection with the incident at the tomb of Constantine V that had occurred only a few years earlier, although it is difficult to be more specific; may it suggest that the commemorations for Leo III and Constantine V were going on at the time of Leo V?

Besides the broad support across social layers in the capital outlined above, we hear of several named individuals – some of them high-ranking – among the group that worked on preparing the Iconoclast arguments[1050] : the two senators, John Spektas and one Eutychianos;[1051] the *anagnostes* (lector) John the Grammarian, the future patriarch John VII (p. 837–42);[1052] Anthony Kassimatas, the bishop of Syllaion, the future patriarch Anthony I (p. 821–37);[1053] the mentioned relative of Constantine V's sons, Theodotos Melissenos, nicknamed Kassiteras, the future patriarch Theodotos I (p. 815–21);[1054] and, finally, the two monks Leontios and Zosimas.[1055] Among these figures, John Grammatikos is recognized as the most energetic among the group in modern scholarship.[1056]

[1046] *Scriptor Incertus*, 58.240–59.250, Τίνος ἕνεκεν, φησί, ταῦτα πῶς ἔχουσιν οἱ Χριστιανοὶ κατακυριευόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶω; Ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ ὅτι διὰ τὸ προσκυνεῖσθαι τὰς εἰκόνας, καὶ ἄλλο οὐδέν· καὶ βούλομαι αὐτὰς καταστρέψαι. Βλέπετε γάρ, φησίν, ὅτι ὅσοι βασιλεῖς ἐδέξαντο καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτάς, ἀπέθανον οἱ μὲν ἐκδιωχθεντες οἱ δὲ ἐν πολέμῳ πεσόντες. Μόνοι δὲ οἱ μὴ προσκυνήσαντες αὐτὰς ἰδίῳ θανάτῳ ἕκαστος εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ ἐτελεύτησαν, καὶ μετὰ δόξης προκομισθεὶς εἰς τὰ τῶν βασιλέων κοιμητήρια ἐτάφη ἐν τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις. Λοιπὸν οὖν ἐκείνους βούλομαι κἀγὼ μιμήσασθαι καὶ καταστρέψαι τὰς εἰκόνας, ἵνα πολὺν ζῆσω χρόνον κἀγὼ καὶ ὁ υἱός μου, καὶ κρατήσει ἡ βασιλεία ἡμῶν ἕως τετάρτης καὶ πέμπτης γενεᾶς.
[1047] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 366–7; Dagron 1994, 113.
[1048] *Oracles of Leo*, VI, 68, tr. Brokkaar, 69; see also the commentary Brokkaar 2002, 38–9.
[1049] See *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §31; *Life of Nikephoros*, 165, 208; and the sections in Nikephoros' *Antirrhetikos III*, 504 C–505 B, analyzed in detail in the following heading.
[1050] On the campaign, see Alexander 1958, 125–40, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 368–74. For more details about the composition of the group, see Alexander 1958, 126–7, and Pratsch 1998, 209–13, with references.
[1051] Little is known about Spektas except that he belonged to the senatorial ranks, PmbZ #3251. According to the *Life of Nikephoros*, 189–90, tr. Fisher 1997, 105, Eutychianos was the *protoasekretis* (chief of imperial chancery) under Emperor Leo V, and the patriarch wrote to threaten him with terrible divine punishment 'if he should *not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord*'. See also Alexander 1958, 133.
[1052] The literature on John the Grammarian is considerable. See Gero 1974/5; Lemerle 1986, 154–69; PmbZ #3199; and an exceptionally thorough entry by Stiernon in *DHGE* vol. 27, no. 457, s.v. 'Jean VII', 84–117.
[1053] Pratsch 1999a; PmbZ #550.
[1054] Pratsch 1999b; PmbZ #7954.
[1055] Like with the two senators, we do not know much about Leontios PmbZ #4590, and Zosimas, PmbZ #8665.
[1056] Alexander 1958, 127; Rosser 1972, 38–9; Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 376–8, 392–4.

He was one of the most learned man of his time, on account of which he became the tutor of the future emperor Theophilos,[1057] and continued to influence the politics of the capital as the patriarch until his removal in 843.[1058] In the campaign for the reintroduction of Iconoclasm, Emperor Leo V positioned himself as the arbiter and tried to bring the patriarch Nikephoros to a dialogue with the Iconoclast group.[1059] The emperor approached the patriarch stating that the people and the army were concerned that the improper icon veneration was causing divine punishment manifested by military defeats.[1060] This sensitivity was expressed publicly in front of the Chalke Gate. The *Scriptor* reports that some soldiers threw stones[1061] and mud at the image of Christ at the Chalke Gate erected by Empress Eirene, shouting iconoclast slogans – instructed by Leo, as the *Scriptor* claims, or perhaps of their own accord.[1062] Either way, the emperor ordered the image to be removed, under the pretext of protecting it from further humiliation. The patriarch refused any discussion on the matter and, initially, he had support from a portion of the clergy who even gave oaths to defend orthodoxy to the death in a meeting in Hagia Sophia; subsequently, however, many of them changed their minds relatively easily.[1063] Nikephoros was deposed and exiled in March 815, and Theodotos I Kassiteras elected as the new patriarch on Easter Sunday (1 April).[1064] Immediately after, the iconoclast council was held in Hagia Sophia. It rejected the decisions of Nikaia II, targeting Eirene throughout the *Horos*, proclaiming that the 'imperial office passed from [the hands of] men into [those of] a woman, and God's Church was undone by female frivolity'.[1065] The council concluded by praising the 'pious' Emperors Leo III and Constantine V and adopting the decisions of the Hiereia council (754).[1066] The decision was publicly proclaimed at the Chalke Gate, by (re-)erecting the cross monument,[1067] and by removing the figure of the Theotokos from imperial seals,[1068] and re-introducing the design of Emperor Leo III, with the cross potent on the obverse accompanied with the Trinitarian formula, and the inscription on the reverse (fig. 34).[1069]

[1057] Possibly already during Leo V's reign, Signes Codoñer 2014, 28–31.
[1058] Ibid. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 392–4.
[1059] Life of Nikephoros, 169–70; *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §§33–4. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 370–1. Signes Codoñer 2014, 18–9.
[1060] *Scriptor Incertus*, 62.333–41.
[1061] Iconophobia manifesting through pelting of icons was not an uncommon phenomenon; Theophanes, 406, reports a certain Constantine, *strator* of Artabasdos, pelting an icon of the Theotokos during the siege of Nikaia in 727. See also Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 152, n. 318, 643, n. 69, with references to earlier examples.
[1062] *Scriptor Incertus*, 64. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 370–1.
[1063] *Scriptor Incertus*, 65. See more details and further references below, n. 1153.
[1064] It is said that Leo wanted to have John Grammarian elected, but that the senate objected that he was too young and not from a prominent family, *Scriptor Incertus*, 69–70.
[1065] Alexander 1953, 59, frg. no. 7; tr. Mango 1997, 168. Eirene was also targeted for reversing Iconoclast policy in the *Oracles of Leo*, 56. For the interpretation, see Brokkaar 2002, 43.
[1066] Alexander 1953, 60, frg. no. 16; tr. Mango 1997, 169.
[1067] Mango 1959, 122–5. Speck 1974.
[1068] *ZV*, 43, no. 48.
[1069] *ZV*, 43, no. 49. *DOS6*, 71, no. 42.1.

Moreover, the evidence from Michael the Syrian suggests that Leo's propaganda portrayed Patriarch Nikephoros as being against the symbol of the cross,[1070] and in the *Oracles of Leo*, the cross was advanced as a symbol of legitimacy,[1071] suggesting that the cross played an important role in the campaign.

Iconoclasm was reintroduced as religious doctrine of the empire with little real opposition apart from the patriarch Nikephoros. Although it might seem obvious, it must be stressed that the 'famous' Isaurian rulers Leo III and Constantine V featured prominently in the campaign, and the memory of their success, in the first place in protecting the empire and the capital from external enemies associated with the Iconoclast religious doctrine, played an important role in return to Iconoclasm overall. As presented, the first statement towards emulating the Isaurians occurred on Symbatios' coronation, renamed as Constantine. In the *Horos* of 815, it was only Leo III and Constantine V that have been acclaimed as pious rulers, even though Leo IV was nominally an Iconoclast ruler as well, but a far less successful imperial model. Proclaiming the change, the cross monument with names of Leo and Constantine was once again erected at the Chalke gate. Moreover, the imperial seals returned to the design identical to that introduced by Leo III – compare figs. 12–13 (Leo III) and fig. 34 (Leo V) – which, it must be stressed, had not been used since the reign of Leo IV; while previous emperors had the cross potent on coins, or even on seals, it was a different type from that introduced by Leo III and employed by his son and grandson.[1072] Lastly, Leo V was remembered by a strict application of the law,[1073] and his surviving novel (d. 819/20), testifies that the emperor and his advisers followed the Isaurian models.[1074] The ideology expressed in the *prooimion* copies the key terms from the *Ekloge*, as Humphreys observed;[1075] he further notes that this continuity is reflected even in the manuscript tradition – Leo V's novel is often found incorporated into the Isaurian legal compilation – and concludes that 'these later compilers thus gave Leo V the highest praise he could have wished: to be treated as a continuator of the Isaurians'.[1076]

Humphreys' correct observation summarizes well the dynastic situation under Leo V. Unlike his immediate predecessors and successor, Leo V had no familial ties with the Isaurian dynasty, or the family of Emperor Nikephoros I, nor did he attempt to create any

[1070] Michael Syr., III.12.15, Fr. tr. Chabot, 70–1.
[1071] *Oracles of Leo*, II, 60, tr. Brokkaar, 61.
[1072] Seals of Constantine VI, for example, certainly produced after the reversal of religious policy, feature the cross potent, but without the Trinitarian formula, *DOS6*, 64–5, no. 35.1.
[1073] Signes Codoñer 2014, 23–5.
[1074] *Novel of Leo V*, Simon 1976, 30–43; Humphreys 2015, 242–4.
[1075] Humphreys 2015, 243, with references.
[1076] Ibid., 244.

through marriage for example[1077] – Nikephoros I had his son Staurakios married to Empress Eirene's relative Theophano; Michael I was married to Nikephoros I' daughter and Staurakios' sister; Michael II took the risky step of marrying Euphrosyne, the daughter of Emperor Constantine VI, who was a nun at the time (on which see further below). Thus, Leo V's dynastic legitimacy was built indeed through association with Leo III and Constantine V, much like Leo III did a century earlier, associating with the Herakleians through the figure of Constantine IV.[1078] Associating with the Isaurians offered clear political advantages to Leo V, but I think their model could have been appealing to Leo even beyond the pragmatism of power, and the fact that he followed these models closely until the end of his reign lends some credence to this interpretation. For a soldier-emperor, there were no better models available in recent history and emulating the Isaurians was associated with hopes of returning to the victorious period, which was not contradicted under Leo V; he successfully ended the devastating war with Bulgaria, allowing him to proclaim himself a victor, and he managed to impose authority among the army – there was no military unrest under Leo V's rule. Further, I believe that the consistently reported wish by Leo V to emulate the longevity of the Isaurian rulers, both personal and dynastic, can be true. While the reports are preserved exclusively in anti-iconoclast sources, such wish was a natural concern of every ruler, and I think these reports should not be dismissed as polemical slander.[1079] Moreover, we will see that the last Iconoclast ruler, Theophilos, also attempted to emulate the dynastic longevity of the Isaurians.

To conclude, the popularity of Leo III and Constantine V among the wider strata in the capital, and the prestige and appeal of these rulers as models of imperial authority and dynastic longevity, contributed considerably to reversing the orthodox doctrine of the empire back to Iconoclasm. The positive memory of the Isaurian rulers that had manifested publicly already before the return to Iconoclasm, was now re-invigorated, receiving official recognition from the top of the state, possibly including annual commemorations in the church of the Holy Apostles.[1080] The influence of the Isaurians was obvious to the iconophiles as well, and while the polemic against Leo III and Constantine V began before 815, I think it is important to lay more stress on the effects of the reversal in 815 on the learned members of the iconophile camp manifested through the anti-Iconoclast texts in the following period, which is explored in the next heading.

[1077] Although this might have been in part because Leo himself was married and his sons were all very young – the eldest Symbatios-Constantine was born around 810, PmbZ #3925.
[1078] See Ch. 1, *Defending the city: Leo III as successor of Constantine IV*. In fact, the circumstances of Leo V's ascension resemble very closely those in which Leo III came to power – both were thematic generals proclaimed emperors by the army and then received in the capital on the eve of a siege, with no strong ties (presumably) to the capital.
[1079] See below, n. 1121.
[1080] See above, n. 1046.

Characteristics of the anti-iconoclast polemics and competition of memory in the early-ninth century Constantinople

In this section, I will present the characteristics of the polemic in texts against Leo III and Constantine V emerging in the period between c. 809 and 820, observing that the texts belong to the competition of memory going on in the capital during this period, and stressing that while these works clearly share common aspects, there is no evidence of their circulation. I will then examine in more detail the evidence from Nikephoros' *Third Antirrhetikos*, and the way he tried to undermine Constantine V's achievements, which provides us with further hints about the legend of Constantine maintained by the pro-Iconoclast partisans. I conclude emphasizing the importance of the realization on the part of the learned clergymen, following the events of 814–15, that religious policy could be changed relatively easily with imperial support.

The earliest anti-iconoclast writings appeared already during Constantine V's reign, but these early works originated mainly outside the capital and/or the empire, and focused on disputing the iconoclastic synod of Hiereia in 754 and the theology against the production and veneration of holy images adopted in this council, not the emperors themselves.[1081] It was only after the council in Nikaia in 787, especially after Eirene had her son Constantine VI blinded and began ruling alone, that more toxic polemics began emerging, focusing on dehumanizing and demonizing the iconoclast emperors, particularly Constantine V.[1082] Again, this kind of polemic also originated outside the capital, and began appearing in Constantinople only in the early ninth century, and, it seems, did not circulate freely until several decades later. It was in the early ninth century that the most influential texts concerning the vilification of the Isaurian emperors appeared: first, the *Life of St Stephen the Younger* by Stephen the Deacon (c. 809), and Theophanes' chronicle (c. 813), composed within five years of each other and before the reintroduction of Iconoclasm in 815; second, the series of texts that the former patriarch Nikephoros composed tirelessly in his exile, from the reintroduction of Iconoclasm 815 to

[1081] To this group of texts belong the works of John of Damascus, the so-called *Nouthesia Gerontos (=NG)*, *Adversus Iconoclastas (=AI)*, and *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum (=ACC)*. The general consensus in scholarship nowadays suggests that all these texts belong to pre-787 period, while many other details remain debated. See the summary in Rochow 1994, 131–7, esp. 131–3 for the early phase, and Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 248–50 (John of Damascus), 250–1 (ACC), 251–2 (NG), 265 (AI), with references. See also Gero 1977, 25–36 (for NG); Auzépy 2007, studies I.3, on ACC, and II.6, on John of Damascus and influences from Palestine. For a detailed treatment of various versions of these texts and their dependence, see Speck 1990, *passim*. Further study of the complex history of these texts will be placed on safer grounds with the forthcoming new edition by Alexakis; see some updated notes on the manuscripts and the dating in Alexakis 2013. The council of Nikaia II in 787 falls in the similar category, as it remained relatively restricted towards the emperors, but denouncing the Iconoclast council step by step and condemning Iconoclast patriarchs and bishops. See Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 260–76, and the latest addition, Price 2018, 1–76.

[1082] The earliest example of such works may be the *Life of the Romanos the Younger* (c. 780), and, somewhat later (c. 805), *On the relics of St Euphemia*. See Rochow 1994, 133, and Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 212 (on Euphemia) 225–6 (on Romanos), with references.

his death in 828.[1083] These texts – transmitted further through later hagiographies, and especially the chronicle of George the Monk – were the most influential for perpetuating the condemnation of the Isaurians in Byzantine historical memory.

It must be stressed first that while Leo III receives his fair share of *damnatio memoriae*,[1084] the polemic against him is almost never as vicious as that against Constantine V, who becomes the primary target of iconophile authors from the early ninth century onwards. It is telling that Leo III is targeted as much as an iconoclast emperor as he is for being the father of *the* arch-heretic, precursor of the Antichrist, Constantine V, and beginning his reign with a series of comparisons of how much worse Constantine was, became a staple among the iconophile authors.[1085] The testimony from Theophanes is especially revealing in this regard, as he makes visibly more effort to edit his narrative when it comes to Constantine V, than he does for his father. Leo is introduced in a relatively neutral fashion, praised for his cunning and military skills in defending Constantinople during the siege, and is qualified as a villain for the first time with the birth of Constantine (discussed in the second chapter), who is immediately marked as the precursor of the antichrist with an appropriate sign to confirm it – defecating in the font on his baptism.[1086] This touches on a common theme shared across the iconophile texts, regardless of the genre; introducing Constantine V as the villain from the very first mention. As Auzépy remarks for the *Life of St Stephen*, 'Ce jugement de valeur, procédé narratif, induit dans l'esprit du lecteur la place de Constantin dans le reste du récit : il l'installe irrémédiablement dans le rôle d'agresseur pour toutes ses actions à venir et exclut toute autre possibilité'.[1087]

The portrayal of Constantine and those considered as his followers can be summarized as being, predictably, delegitimizing, dehumanizing, demonizing, and overall de-Christianizing; these major traits of course are not mutually exclusive, but in fact work together, reinforcing the overall condemnation.[1088] The introduction of Constantine V's reign in Theophanes, who clearly invested considerable effort to compose this summary, is an excellent snapshot of this portrayal and worth presenting in full:

> It is now proper to review in succession the lawless deeds, even more sacrilegious and abhorred by God, of his [i.e. Leo III] most impious and altogether

[1083] See below, 1103.
[1084] See the detailed analysis of the treatment of Leo III by Dagron 2003, 158–91. For the notorious case of the destruction of Christ's image on the Chalke gate under the emperor Leo III, see Auzépy 1990.
[1085] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§23–24. Theophanes, 413, quoted below, 1089. *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §28.
[1086] See ch. 1, subheading 'When was Constantine V Born?
[1087] Ruan (Auzépy) 1981, 424, n. 32. The examples in *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §24, and Theophanes, 399–400. The same approach is visible in the *Scriptor Incertus*, 40, introducing Leo V as being an evil tyrant.
[1088] See for example Mondzain-Baudinet 1989, 18–21, analysing the portrayal of the iconoclasts in Nikephoros' *Antirrhetikoi*.

> wretched son, yet to do so objectively (inasmuch as the all-seeing God is observing us) for the benefit of posterity and of those wretched and wicked men who still follow the abominable heresy of that criminal, namely by recounting his impious actions from the 10th indiction, the first year of his reign, until the 14th indiction, the year of his damnation. Now this pernicious, crazed, bloodthirsty, and most savage beast, who seized power by illegal usurpation, from the very start parted company from our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, His pure and all-holy Mother and all the saints; led astray as he was by magic, licentiousness, bloody sacrifices, by the dung and urine of horses and delighting in impurity and the invocation of demons. In a word, he was reared from early youth in all soul-destroying pursuits. And when he took over both his father's dominion and his wickedness, need one explain how great an evil he straight away kindled and fanned into a conspicuous flame that rose up in the air? When the Christians saw these things they were seized by great despondency, so that everyone immediately hated him for his effrontery and took up the cause of his brother in law, Artabasdos.[1089]

As Jenkins remarked long ago, 'the portrait is not of a man at all, but of a heretic, hence devil incarnate […] breathing fire and brimstone'.[1090] The de-Christianizing aspect comes forth strongly, as Theophanes first stressed that Constantine parted with Christ, the Theotokos and the saints, from the outset, and later conveys the same motif more subtly in the statement that 'Christians saw these things' (i.e. 'Constantine's wickedness'), implying that Constantine was not a Christian. Theophanes directed the same condemnation at the soldiers involved with the tomb incident, whom he labelled as being 'Christians only in semblance', and equated them with Paulicians,[1091] and Nikephoros did the same on several occasions, marking the iconoclasts as Manicheans.[1092] Another way of conveying the same message was by placing emphasis on Constantine's, and his followers', non-Christian conduct, particularly visible in the *Life of Stephen the Younger*, where it was contrasted against the model of a saint, as Auzépy stressed;[1093] the emperor had three wives, but he is also accused of homosexuality, eating meat excessively, and enjoying music, theatre and mimes.[1094] Auzépy demonstrated that this characterization constituted a typology of an iconoclast which was, moreover, inseparable from the doctrine; accepting offers from the court of food, for example, symbolized participation in heresy.[1095] Indeed all the major authors include some or all of the aforementioned characterizations,[1096] however, this was not merely, or not only, a rhetorical

[1089] Theophanes, 413.10–30, tr. Mango and Scott, 573.
[1090] Jenkins 1954, 14.
[1091] See above, subheading 'The 'Bulgarian crisis' (811–813) and Pro-Constantine V incidents in Constantinople'.
[1092] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 501 B–C. Nikephoros repeated the condemnation of iconoclasts as Manicheans/Paulicians in his later works, see Featherstone 1997, xiii–xiv, n. 2, with references.
[1093] Rouan (Auzépy) 1981, 425.
[1094] Examples at *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§26, 47, 63; analysis in Rouan (Auzépy) 1981, 425–8.
[1095] Rouan (Auzépy) 1981, 427–8.
[1096] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§47, 63. Theophanes, 437, says that the emperor forced the patriarch Constantine to eat meat and to listen music of cither at the imperial table. *Scriptor Incertus*, 69–70, states that the new patriarch Theodotos I began throwing luxurious dinners including a lot of meat, forcing monks and bishops to eat heartily, and introduced laughter and jokes into the patriarchal palace. Nikephoros, *Anirrhetikos III*, 488 C, 492 C–D,

device; as Alexander demonstrated, Theodore of Stoudios and other iconophiles took this aspect very seriously, refusing to share meals with those in communion with the Iconoclast Church.[1097]

It is not a coincidence that these works have been composed in Constantinople in the early ninth century. Such strong reaction represents a competition of memory at the time, a reaction to the kind of partisanship explored in the previous headings,[1098] and which is also visible in Nikephoros' *III Antirrhetikos* (the following heading). Furthermore, despite thematic similarities present in the polemical works, ideological overlapping and even plausible connections between the authors behind these works,[1099] there seem to be no literal correspondence, no evidence that the authors were aware of each other's work. Auzépy suggests that Theophanes could have known the *Life of St Stephen*,[1100] but there is no proof of it, and the different versions of the Chalke incident is rather an evidence against such assumption,[1101] especially in the absence of any literal connection. In other words, while the discussed works were all composed in the early ninth century (c. 809–20) there is no evidence of early circulation of any of the texts, unlike the example of George the Monk writing in the mid-ninth century, who had access to all the main texts here mentioned.[1102] This is an important conclusion, because it suggests that the more vicious anti-iconoclast polemic did not have enough space and time to manifest itself in the capital, implying that the positive memory of the Isaurian emperors was probably retained until after the death of the emperor Theophilos.

Condemnation of Constantine V in the Patriarch Nikephoros' 'Third Antirrhetikos'

While Nikephoros' oeuvre shares common themes with the major two works of his contemporaries discussed above, it is unique in that, first, it was composed after Iconoclasm had been reintroduced by a person who suffered exile for defying the change of religious policy, and, second, that collectively, Nikephoros' voluminous works can be considered as an anti-iconoclast programme.[1103] The patriarch spent most of his time in his exile carefully composing various texts and it is clear that, as Alexander concluded,

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504 C–505 B, 513 C, includes a similar set of accusations, often calling the iconoclasts 'slaves of their belly' (e.g. 492 C), but it is noteworthy that these are absent from his chronicle, although a more general statement to the same effect is present, Nikephoros, §80, tr. Mango, 153, 'the manner of life of the pious and those devoted to God was ridiculed and mocked'.

[1097] Alexander 1977, 240–1, 249–56.

[1098] The texts leave clear traces that 'the followers of Constantine V' were still around, and work against them, *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §§18, 38. Theophanes, 413, 501. Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 501 A, 504 C.

[1099] Explored by Auzépy 1990, 175ff.

[1100] Auzépy 1990, 174.

[1101] *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §10. Theophanes, 404–5.

[1102] Namely, the *Life of St Stephen*, Theophanes, Nikephoros' *Antirrhetikoi*, *Life of Niketas of Medikion*.

[1103] On Nikephoros' works, see Alexander 1958, 156–88; Featherstone 1997, xiii–xxxiv; Mondzain-Baudinet 1989, 8–34, focusing on the three *Anttirhetikoi*. For the theology in the works of Nikephoros, see Barber 2002.

'in Nicephorus' opinion, a fundamental refutation of Iconoclasm was possible only if it were directed against the writings of Constantine V and against Iconoclasm in general'.[1104] Among Nikephoros' works, the most important for the present study is the *Third Antirrhetikos*, especially the chapters engaging with and refuting the legend of Constantine V that existed and was no doubt maintained by the partisans of Iconoclast 'camp'. Important aspect to bear in mind is that the treatise was meant to be addressed to the new emperor Leo V, although we cannot know if it ever reached him.[1105] Alexander already stressed the historical importance of this section,[1106] but the text has rarely been examined in more detail on its own. Mondzain-Baudinet published a French translation of all three *Antirrhetikoi*, with a brief commentary, and her focus is on larger theological themes, more recently examined by Barber,[1107] while Speck was the only one, to my knowledge, to examine this section focusing on the legend of Constantine V.[1108]

Nikephoros announces the anti-Constantine section writing that:

> Since some of these enemies of Christ announce loudly the things inspired by the father of lies, well, let us examine these claims. They glorify Mammon [Constantine V] indeed, through the insults they inflict on Christ and on the Church, evaluating that he enjoyed for a very long time a long life and a happy existence, that he touched supreme happiness, recounting his victories against the barbarians and his countless exploits, which it would not be right to be heard even by wise ears; so that the lies born of error cannot cause much damage among the simplest and least educated people, let us therefore prove, by correcting each of these, that these are only vain speakers deceiving themselves by the vanity of their speeches. [1109]

Although it may be nothing more than a rhetorical phrase, the concern that the 'less educated' might be affected by the legend corresponds to an extent with the sanctions against the Iconoclasts under Emperor Michael I, and suggests Nikephoros' text was conceived as a 'weapon' against Iconoclast propaganda.[1110] The patriarch mentions victories against the barbarians, innumerable exploits, and in particular, a long and happy (εὐημερίας) life, and goes on to refute them step by step, not without difficulties, employing a broad range of interesting and sometimes ingenious solutions.

Nikephoros denounces Constantine V's longevity in several ways. First, he claims that the emperor's life was in fact miserable and painful; he alleges that there are still people alive who served Constantine and could witness the 'horrors that afflicted his

[1104] Alexander 1958, 188.
[1105] Speck 1990, 554.
[1106] Alexander 1958, 170–1.
[1107] Mondzain-Baudinet 1989, 17–34. Barber 2002.
[1108] Speck 1990, 535–56.
[1109] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 504 C.
[1110] On 'texts as weapons' in this period, see Cameron (Av.) 1994.

body', adding that some of the emperor's limbs were disabled by the wounds and lost flesh in places.[1111] Nikephoros is here hinting at leprosy, the famous mark of rulers who disobeyed God, and it is significant that in his later cynical proposal of the king Uzziah as a 'positive' example, he adds that this ruler became a leper due to his idolatry.[1112] Relating Constantine's death, Nikephoros provides a proper interpretation that, considering the painful existence, God in fact punished Constantine by prolonging his life.[1113] Nikephoros, however, contradicts himself in the pursuit of denying that Constantine's life was long, claiming that 'the length of his life was not long, fifty-eight, no more'.[1114] The real appeal as an imperial model, however, was Emperor Constantine V's exceptionally long reign, and Nikephoros engages with this issue through his catalogue of historical and biblical ruler models (both negative and positive). Thus, he ironically asks his addressee are not Uzziah and Manasseh – some of the most hated figures in the Old Testament – rulers to be admired, adding that the former ruled for fifty and the latter for fifty-five years, claiming, as throughout the work, that a long reign should not be equated with piety.[1115] Describing the reign of Octavian Augustus, as the second name on his ironic list of 'positive' rulers, he mentions that the length of Octavian's rule was 'about as much as Mammon's life'.[1116] How Nikephoros dealt with this issue when contrasting Constantine V with his positive catalogue is revealing. For the emperors who reigned longer (Justinian I and Theodosius II), Nikephoros stresses precisely and proudly the length of their reigns, emphatically in the case of Theodosius II: 'consider the very long duration of his reign since it is something dear to you and very desirable […] Indeed, Theodosius occupied the imperial throne for forty-two years'.[1117] Those that reigned shorter are treated differently; Constantine the Great is said to have 'lived a time sufficient for a human life',[1118] while Herakleios is said to have reigned for thirty years but lived double that time (60),[1119] i.e. he lived longer than Constantine V (58). Overall, as Speck notes, Nikephoros clearly had difficulties explaining away Constantine's long life as a proof of piety.[1120] Considering that this section was addressed to Leo V, and that Nikephoros devotes considerable space to this theme, it seems even more likely that

[1111] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 505 A. On Constantine's supposed illness, see Speck 1990, 542–3, and Rochow 1994, 18.
[1112] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 513 A.
[1113] Ibid., 508 A.
[1114] Ibid., 505 D.
[1115] Ibid., 513 A–B.
[1116] Ibid., 509 D.
[1117] Ibid., 520 D. On Justinian I, ibid., 524 B.
[1118] Ibid., 520 B.
[1119] Ibid., 525 A.
[1120] Speck 1990, 545. He, however, argues that the issue of long life must be related with an emperor that reigned longer and considers portions of this section to be a later interpolation, with which I would disagree. Nikephoros is clearly refuting that Constantine V's long reign and life had anything to do with piety and divine grace, trying to dissuade his addressee from following Constantine's example in hopes of longevity.

the reports of Leo V's wish to emulate the Isaurians in hopes of emulating their longevity are true.[1121]

Nikephoros undermines Emperor Constantine V's military achievements in several ways. He begins by addressing what, he says, had been celebrated as one of the greatest victories – the 763 battle at Anchialos.[1122] Nikephoros implies, without saying so openly, that the achievement of which Constantine boasts in his reports were lies,[1123] and ironically states that the testimonies are there to say what was the glorious outcome of the war; namely that almost all of the Byzantine army perished, and that the bodies are still visible in plains and valleys around Anchialos.[1124] Nikephoros further stresses that Constantine exploited the 'barbarian' chieftains fighting each other,[1125] and conquered some of the cities not through battle but with the agreement of the citizens, entering the territory 'like a thief rather than a soldier' (λῃστρικώτερόν πως μᾶλλον ἢ στρατηγικῶτερον).[1126] It is noteworthy that even in such a hostile invective, Nikephoros cannot deny that Constantine had achieved victories. It is telling that, while the majority of the section was about the wars against the Bulgarians, Nikephoros includes a reference to the Arabs, attempting to portray Constantine as a coward, saying that the emperor has openly stated that he was afraid of the 'barbarians of the East',[1127] and that he fled as soon as he heard that the Arabs were approaching.[1128] As with the long reign, Nikephoros is at pains trying to undermine Constantine V's military success.

As mentioned, the major approach of denouncing Constantine's achievements is through comparison with examples of other rulers, which can be divided in three groups: the first, arguably the most interesting group, which can be labeled as 'ironic'; the second, comprised of notoriously negative ruler models; and the final one, containing the most venerated rulers in Christian Roman history. Nikephoros prefaces his list with what is the essence of much of his text, the relation between the success in this life and orthodoxy: 'Let us suppose that one measures faith by victories, brave deeds, [living] long period of time, and all these other goods which are recognized to make the happiness and the success of the present life, and not by devotion to the divine and apostolic message'.[1129] In pursuit of denying that Constantine's 'earthly' achievements had anything to do with piety, Nikephoros conjures up other, in various ways better examples, beginning

[1121] See above, 1079.
[1122] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 505 A.
[1123] Ibid., 505 B.
[1124] Ibid., 505 B. While the overall statement of huge casualties seems reliable, it must be stressed the bodies still visible on the battlefield is one of the ancient *topoi*, and may be reasonably doubted.
[1125] Ibid., 508 B–D.
[1126] Ibid., 508 D. This line sounds very much as a known expression, but I could not locate it.
[1127] Discussed in the ch. 2, subheading 'Organizing imperial campaigns'.
[1128] Ibid., 508 C, 509 A.
[1129] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 509 A–B.

with the 'ironic' group, in order Alexander, Octavian, and the Athenian Timotheos, before switching to the obviously negative examples of Assyrian and Jewish rulers.[1130] The example of Alexander is particularly interesting as Nikephoros presents him as the most glorious of all rulers and conquerors in human history, yet, very subtly, subverts the image in the concluding lines, suggesting that while some *didaskaloi* praised Alexander's achievements as far beyond what a human can hope for, others, connected it with the Persian dominion.[1131] That Alexander should not be considered as a positive model is reinforced in the concluding lines of this section when Nikephoros denounces anyone admiring the achievements of the one who had founded the 'great Alexandria'.[1132] The previous passage is still difficult to interpret; it may be deriving from Alexander's adoption of Persian customs, stressed in the Chronicle of George the Synkellos, Nikephoros' contemporary: '[he] reigned over Persia in a barbarian style of life'.[1133] It is possible that an analogy was meant between Alexander denounced as being Persian-like, and Constantine V as being Arab-like, although Nikephoros does not use the epithet 'Saracen-minded' for Constantine as Theophanes does for Leo III.[1134] It must be stressed that Alexander was an immensely popular figure not only in Byzantium, but across the Mediterranean and the Middle East.[1135] His name was embedded in the topography of Constantinople,[1136] and he was adopted as the predecessor of Roman rulers and introduced in the eschatological history as a victor over Biblical enemies, visible in Byzantine chronicles, the *Alexander Romance*, and in Pseudo-Methodios' *Apocalypse*.[1137] Thus, it may seem somewhat surprising to see that Nikephoros undermines Alexander as a positive example, but it is interesting that he does so subtly and carefully. This might imply that Constantine V's admirers likened him to Alexander, forcing Nikephoros to go to such length to discredit the image. My impression is that Nikephoros tried to employ the

[1130] Ibid., 509 C–512 B, with one positive exception of the King Josiah, Ibid., 513 B.
[1131] Ibid., 509 D, οὕτω γάρ τισι τῶν διδασκάλων τὰ κατὰ τὸν τόπον τεθεώρηται, ἐπεὶ καὶ δραστικώτερον ᾗ κατ' ἐλπίδας ἀνθρωπίνας, τὰ κατὰ νοῦν αὐτῷ ἐπεραίνετο· οὐ γὰρ σχολαῖον εἶχε τὸ ὅρμημα, αλλ' ὡς ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς ἰών εἷλεν ἅπαντας· ἕτεροι γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς Περσῶν δυναστείας τοῦτο ἐξειλήφασιν.
[1132] Ibid., 512 C.
[1133] George the Synkellos, 318; tr. Adler and Tuffin, 385.
[1134] Theophanes, 405.
[1135] See the contributions by Moening, Doufkar-Aerts, and Rubanovich, in Cupane and Krönung 2016.
[1136] Primarily through the legend that associated Alexander with the Great Strategion, believed to have been founded by him or that he moved from there to conquer Persia, Malalas, VIII.1, and XII.20. George the Synkellos, 316, states that there existed a statue of Alexander and his father Philip, although it is unclear where. According to the *Parastaseis*, §69, tr. Cameron and Herrin, 150–1 (commentary, 264–5), 'the tripod in the Great Strategion, according to Promountius, is of Alexander of Macedon'. Finally, in the *Patria*, II, 59, tr. Berger, 90–3, it is stated that 'the statue called Strategion, which stands on the great <square>, is Alexander of Macedonia'. It may well be that all three are talking about the same object, but this cannot be confirmed.
[1137] Malalas, VIII.1, 29. *Ps-Methodius Apocalype*, §8. See also Garstad 2012, xii, n. 14. Somewhat surprisingly, the figure of Alexander and various versions of the *Romance* – and there are good arguments that the so-called version 'epsilon' (ε) may date to the Iconoclast period – is completely overlooked in works focusing on this period. On the image of Alexander in Byzantium, see numerous works by Corinne Jouanno: Jouanno 2001 and 2018 on Alexander in Byzantine chronicles; ead. 2002, is a thorough examination of the development of the Alexander Romance – see pp. 339-440, for the analysis of the 'epsilon' version; ead. 2004, on Alexander as an imperial model. See also Moening 2016.

model of Alexander in two ways; on the one hand to present how Alexander's achievements dwarf those of Constantine V, yet, to undermine Alexander as a positive model since he was, after all, a pagan ruler venerated as a god.[1138] I think Nikephoros does something similar with the next name on his list; he states that Octavian occupied an even larger empire than Alexander, and reigned approximately as long as Constantine V lived, but then adds that in his time the trial of Christ and massacre of children by Herod took place.[1139] The brief mention of the Athenian Timotheos, who is said to have enjoyed good fortune, is altogether surprising – and the surprise seems to be on Nikephoros' part too (Θαύμαζέ μοι).[1140] The possible connections with Constantine V are, first, the name of Timotheos' father, Conon, which was the baptismal name of Constantine V's father, Leo III; and second, that Timotheos had a reputation of being a lucky general, with particular success in Thrace and Macedonia.[1141] Nikephoros may have known Timotheos from the works of Xenophon, or perhaps through Isocrates' orations (especially *Antidosis*) which Photios mentions in his *Bibliotheca*.[1142] It is possible that Nikephoros was here undermining Constantine V's success by suggesting he was being lucky, but the question is who would have understood this allusion? The impression is, that Nikephoros had in mind the learned group around the emperor Leo V who participated in the reintroduction of Iconoclasm.[1143] Another conclusion is that, like with the example of Aristotelian interpretation of celestial phenomena, Nikephoros demonstrates classical knowledge, which he soundly rejects in favor of Christian truth.

Moving to the climax, the list of truly positive rulers follows in the order: Constantine the Great (517 B–520 C), Theodosius II (520 C–D), Theodosius I (520 D–521 D), Justinian I (524 B–C), Herakleios (524 C–525 A). It comes as no surprise that all rulers in this list are described as having perfect orthodoxy, clear from the introductory statement. [1144] Besides the predictable praise of each of the figures for their well-known achievements, e.g. of Justinian for building Hagia Sophia,[1145] it may be mentioned that Nikephoros used every opportunity to emphasise the veneration shown to icons and relics by earlier emperors. Thus, Constantine the Great is credited with not only exterminating idolatry and erecting sacred temples, but also adorning them with icons.[1146] Praising Theodosius I for his military victories, Nikephoros stresses how he relied as little as possible on the

[1138] Reiterated in George the Synkellos, 307.
[1139] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 509 D–512 A.
[1140] Ibid., 512 A, Θαύμαζέ μοι καὶ τὸν Ἀθηναῖον Τιμόθεον, ὅς τὴν τύχην εὐπαθῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἔσχε συμπράττουσαν.
[1141] *OCD*[3] s.v. 'Timotheos (2), Athenian general'.
[1142] Photios*, Bibliotheka*, II, § 159, 119–21.
[1143] See the previous heading. On learning in Byzantium in this period, see Lemerle 1986, 81–120.
[1144] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 517 C.
[1145] Ibid., 524 C.
[1146] Ibid., 520 A.

army, having no confidence in the abundance of soldiers. Instead, Theodosius achieved a great victory using as his 'weapons' the holy relics (a stick and a cloth) that he had received from a holy man in Egypt – wrapping the cloth around his head 'like a helmet', and using the stick 'like a spear'. In honor of this victory, Nikephoros adds, an icon had been painted of the emperor representing him with these weapons.[1147] We find a similar approach in Theophanes. Tamarkina recently argued that relics played an important role in Theophanes' *Chronographia* as markers of imperial orthodoxy, and, moreover, that the chronicler established a correlation between imperial victories and relics; she also demonstrated that Theophanes had to rearrange his material to stress this point.[1148] In contrast, no relic is mentioned in the *Chronographia* during the iconoclast period.

A consistent message is that achievements of this world are not a proof of proper orthodoxy and piety – corresponding well with Theophanes' statement that the Iconoclasts claimed Constantine V had achieved victories on account of his piety – and the only truly positive examples are Christian rulers who protected orthodoxy in the, from the iconophile viewpoint, appropriate manner. Nikephoros struggles to undermine Constantine V's achievements, and it is interesting that he had to conjure some of the most famous names in history to do so. Addressing the theme of Theophanes and Nikephoros comparing Constantine V with earlier negative or positive models, Magdalino asked 'are they not implicitly countering the latter's claim to be a new Constantine?'[1149] I think this may well be the case. I would just add that Nikephoros, struggling to denounce Constantine V by comparing him with the most celebrated rulers of the Christian Roman empire is arguably the best surviving confirmation of the high regard in which the Isaurian emperor had been held by Nikephoros' political opponents – in denying the greatness of Alexander and Octavian, Nikephoros might well argue against existing perceptions – , and is a hint at how Constantine V might have been remembered in Byzantine history overall, had he not been condemned as a heretic.

It is notable that the texts against Iconoclasm transformed from focusing on the synod of Hiereia and theological arguments, to an ad hominem polemic that demonized the emperors, especially Constantine V. The vilification is understandable, with Constantine being remembered as the de facto theologian and the authenticator of the iconoclast council in Hiereia; in addition, it must also be a response to the popularity of the emperor among the wider population, and probably in opposition to the promotion by the partisans of the Isaurian dynasty that played a seminal role in the return to Iconoclasm in 815. Likewise, while the condemnation of Constantine V in part served to criticize the

[1147] Ibid., 521 A–C. Mondzain-Baudinet 1989, 289–90, n. 197, identified that Nikephoros borrowed elements of the story from the martyrdom of Kyros and John (*BHG* 469).
[1148] Tamarkina 2015.
[1149] Magdalino 2007a, 20–1.

emperor Leo V who instituted the return to Iconoclasm, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the imperial model of Constantine V was a highly appealing one. Nikephoros, who devoted so much energy to refuting Iconoclasm and any positive memory of Constantine V states at one point that 'our chastisement will not cease whilst the memory of the wicked remains on the lips of his followers'.[1150] This statement captures well the attitude towards the emperor Constantine V by the iconophiles throughout the ninth century. More importantly, it hints at the effects of the re-introduction of Iconoclasm in 815 on the members of the iconophile camp, which has not been given enough weight in scholarship, I believe. It is worth repeating that return to the iconoclast doctrine in 815 was instituted relatively easily; much more so, in fact, than the termination of Iconoclasm in 786–7.[1151] To begin with, support for the change was substantial enough, and even the members of the clergy changed their stance under imperial incentive with little resistance even though they had previously laid a pledge to oppose Iconoclasm to the death[1152] – the fact that the deposed Patriarch Nikephoros laments about: 'the most pitiful of all, worthy of wailing, lamentation and tears, is the following; the priests and bishops are even now seduced by their reasoning and their speeches'.[1153] Realization that an emperor can institute a change of doctrinal position of the church with relative ease was disturbing, and it manifested most directly in the *Life of Niketas of Medikion* by Theosteriktos. Responding to Leo V's claim of being merely an arbiter in the dispute, Peter, the metropolitan of Nikaia, pronounces that if they had the emperor as their ally, even the Manicheans would overcome the orthodox.[1154] Moreover, Theosteriktos brands Iconoclasm as the 'imperial heresy': 'the other heresies came from the bishops or lesser priests, whereas this one comes from those in power'.[1155] The same sensation is revealed in a rumor circulating in the ninth century, that Emperor Constantine VI threatened the then patriarch Tarasios to reintroduce Iconoclasm if he were not given dispensation (οἰκονομία) of his first marriage,[1156] the incident that caused the so-called 'Moechian controversy'.[1157] While Henry considered that the rumor might be true, Speck

[1150] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 501 A, καὶ οὐκ ἄν ἀπολήξαιμεν παιδευόμενοι, ἕως ἡ μνήμη τοῦ δυσσεβοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσης τῶν ὁμοτρόπων ἵσταται.
[1151] See above, sub-heading 'Reversing the Iconoclast policy under Eirene (786/87)'.
[1152] *Scriptor Incertus*, 65 (signing the oath to resist to death), Ibid., 67 (note that almost all have switched sides). See also Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 376–8.
[1153] Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 501 C, τούτων ὁ δὴ πάντων ἐλεεινότατον, καὶ θρήνων καὶ οἰμωγῶν καὶ δακρύων ἄξιον· τοῖς φρονήμασι καὶ τοῖς λόγοις οἱ νῦν ἱερεῖς ὑπάγονται καὶ ἐπίσκοποι. See also ibid., 501 D–504 C; and *Life of Nikephoros*, 162, relating how Leo V converted people to Iconoclasm.
[1154] *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §34, xxv. See a similar speech ascribed to Theodore of Stoudios on the same occasion in the *Life of Nikephoros*, 187–8.
[1155] Ibid., §27; tr. Dagron 2003, 188. See the pertinent discussion in ibid., 187–91.
[1156] *Narratio de sanctis patriarchis Tarasio et Nicephoro* (BHG 1757), PG 99, 1852 D, ὁ αὐτὸς Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ βασιλεὺς, εἰ μὲν τῷ αὐτοῦ θελήματι ὑποκύψει ὁ πατριάρχης, τῶν ἔναγχος βασιλευσάντων τὴν αἵρεσιν ἀνανεώσασθαι, καὶ τὰς σεπτὰς καὶ ἁγίας εἰκόνας πάλιν καθαιρήσειν. The story appears also in several *Lives* of Theodore of Stoudios and in a distorted form in Kedrenos, see Pratsch 1998, 86–7, n. 26, with references.
[1157] On the 'Moechian controversy', see Pratsch 1998, 83–114 (first phase), 147–78 (second phase).

and others reasonably contested this opinion, observing the absence from other sources, most notably, in Theophanes, who would probably not have missed to mention it if he knew about it, and even from the *Life of Tarasios*.[1158] Since all the testimonies of this rumor are post-815, I would suggest that it reflects a contemporary understanding projected backwards.

Iconoclasm under the Amorians (820–42): The lasting political value of the Isaurian emperors as models of imperial authority and dynastic longevity

The purpose of this section is comparably modest. I wish to point out to links with the Isaurian dynasty under the emperors Michael II and his son Theophilos, and to reiterate that overall, the historical memory of Leo III and Constantine V *inside the capital* remained relatively undisturbed at least until Theophilos' death in 842.

Michael the Amorian came to power after the assassination of his predecessor Leo V. [1159] The first major challenge of his reign was facing the rebellion of Thomas the Slav, whose army besieged the capital for more than a year.[1160] For present purposes, it is important to note that the new emperor maintained iconoclast policy, contrary to the expectations of the members of the iconophile party at the time, and even contemporary scholarship.[1161] Brubaker and Haldon proposed that maintaining Iconoclasm reflected the strength of connection between imperial victory and Iconoclasm,[1162] while Signes Codoñer stressed that 'the attack of Thomas against the capital would have forced Michael to commit to Iconoclasm, favoured by the people and the army of the besieged city'.[1163] However, Michael II did not actively pursue the policy, and he seem to have aimed at calming the tensions. Almost immediately after he became emperor, Michael recalled a number of figures exiled under Leo V, most importantly Theodore of Stoudios, which raised iconophile hopes for restoration of icon-worship.[1164] However, Michael resisted attempts from Theodore of Stoudios and the former Patriarch Nikephoros to institute a reversal of the religious policy back to the decisions of Nikaia II (787).[1165] Like Leo V, Michael attempted to bring the two parties together to discuss the issue, which was

[1158] Henry 1969, 501, n. 2. Speck 1978, 189; Pratsch 1998, 87, n. 26. Theophanes, 469–71. *Life of Tarasios*, §§39–47.
[1159] On Michael II's reign, see overall Treadgold 1988, 220–62; more recently Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 386–92, and especially Signes-Codoñer 2015, 25–110. See also PmbZ #4990.
[1160] The career and rebellion of Thomas the Slav has been carefully re-assessed by Signes Codoñer 2014, 33–59, and especially 183–214, who argues first, that the rebellion had begun in the last year of Leo V's reign, and second, that Thomas was a puppet of the Abbasids. See also PmbZ #8459.
[1161] Pratsch 1998, 263–71. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 386. Signes-Codoñer 2015, 28–9.
[1162] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 386.
[1163] Signes-Codoñer 2014, 29.
[1164] Pratsch 1998, 264–6.
[1165] The statements about the correspondence between the former patriarch Nikephoros and the emperor Michael II found in Th.Cont. II, §8, and *Life of Nikephoros*, 209–10, essentially agree with the impression coming from more contemporary sources, even if they cannot be verified, Pratsch 1998, 268, n. 33.

soundly rejected by Theodore of Stoudios, writing in the name of 'all bishops and abbots'.[1166] The iconophile abbots then sent an embassy to Michael, in a final attempt to persuade him to change his mind, but, the emperor was determined to leave the church as he had found it.[1167] More importantly, the emperor responded to the abbots that they were free to worship images, but only *outside* of Constantinople.[1168] This clearly shows it would have been politically dangerous for Michael to allow public veneration of icons inside the capital; moreover, as Signes Codoñer points out, the emperor kept in high positions some of the figures active under his predecessors, most notably the new patriarch Anthony I Kassymatas.

Michael II: A marriage match with the last Isaurian

The second relevant event of Michal II's reign was his second marriage to Euphrosyne, the daughter of the emperor Constantine VI and his first wife Maria.[1169] Euphrosyne and her mother were retired to a nunnery since 795, after Constantine VI had forced the divorce and re-married Theodote. As Signes Codoñer remarks, the emperor's decision was indeed a bold one,[1170] because he was well aware of the potential scandal involved in marrying a nun, and, presumably less damaging, marrying for the second time too soon after his wife Thekla's passing.[1171] It is telling that the emperor had to elicit support from the Senate for his marriage. According to *Theophanes Continuatus*, 'he induced the Senate, through secret and private messages, to persuade him to choose again to marry a woman – and not only to bid, but also to constrain him to do this'.[1172] Moreover, the same source relates that the emperor managed to get written oaths of loyalty to respect the marriage *before* announcing the name of his bride.[1173] The emperor's act has been recorded as fornication (*porneia*) in later literature, and there was some opposition at the time, expressed mainly by Theodore of Stoudios, but Michael II's campaign was overall successful.[1174]

There is little doubt that the emperor took the risk of causing a scandal in order to improve his legitimacy by attaching himself to the Isaurian dynasty, which still carried a

[1166] Pratsch 1998, 267.
[1167] *Life of Nikephoros*, 209–10. Th.Cont. II, §8.4–8. See Pratsch 1998, 269, n. 41, with further references.
[1168] Pratsch 1998, 269, n. 40, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 381, n. 54, with an extensive list of references.
[1169] Th.Cont. II. §24. Genesios, II. §14. See Pratsch 1998, 278–81, with references to the relevant letters of Theodore of Stoudios. See also Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 391–2, and Signes-Codoñer 2015, 103–5.
[1170] Signes Codoñer 2014, 103.
[1171] Both issues came to the fore, Th.Cont., II. §24; Brubaker and Haldon, 2011, 391–2; Signes Codoñer 2014, 103–4.
[1172] Th.Cont., II. §24.7–9; tr. Featherstone and Signes Codoñer, 115.
[1173] Th.Cont., II. §24.13–17; tr. Featherstone and Signes Codoñer, 117.
[1174] Pratsch 1998, 278–81. Signes Codoñer 2014, 103.

considerable political value and prestige. As Signes Codoñer pointed out, this is corroborated by the fact that, at the beginning of his rebellion, Thomas the Slav pretended to be Constantine VI.[1175] Moreover, Brubaker and Haldon note that the political value of Michael's marriage to Euphrosyne was that she was not only a member of the Isaurian dynasty, but also a descendent of an iconophile emperor (Constantine VI).[1176] This would seemingly fit with Michael II's relatively conciliatory policy concerning icon veneration.

Emperor Theophilos: Reviving Isaurian glory?

Unlike his father Michael, Theophilos pursued an iconoclast religious policy more fervently. Besides this obvious connection (which will be briefly addressed at the end of this section), the influence of the Isaurian rulers, and especially of Constantine V, on Emperor Theophilos is visible in his dynastic policy, where we see the most direct emulation, and more broadly defined imperial conduct, characterized by a strict and public application of justice, reliance on popular support, and stress on imperial triumphs.

Emperor Theophilos followed closely Isaurian models when it came to dynastic policy. He named his first son Constantine,[1177] after Constantine V.[1178] Emperor Constantine the Great should never be excluded as an inspiration, but the Constantinian ideal was already subsumed in the name, and probably in the model of Constantine V,[1179] especially if Magdalino is correct that he took seriously the role of the 'New Constantine'.[1180] Moroever, the Isaurian ruler was both a more recent and a more likely model in the context of Iconoclasm as religious policy of the empire.[1181] Theophilos' son Constantine, however, died in infancy.[1182] After his death, the emperor introduced a *nomisma* featuring the two deceased members of the dynasty on the obverse, his father Michael and son Constantine (fig. 35), [1183] which followed the Isaurian precedence.[1184] This type

[1175] Signes Codoñer 2014, 103. Th.Cont. II. §10. Genesios, II. §4.
[1176] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 392.
[1177] PmbZ #3931. See also 1182.
[1178] Rosser 1972, 99–100. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 403.
[1179] In other words, the two models are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
[1180] Magdalino 2007a.
[1181] Theophilos may have been additionally influenced through the example of his godfather Emperor Leo V, Rosser 1972, 98–101.
[1182] We know that Constantine had died very young (he drowned in a cistern within the imperial palace), but the dates of his birth, coronation and death have been one of the long-standing issues in scholarship. The latest examination sets Constantine's birth in late 830 or early 831, the coronation soon after, and the death before 31 August 832, Yannopoulos 2016, with previous literature.
[1183] DOC3.1, 406–8, 424–8, pl. xxii, no. 3. Füeg 2007, 27, pl. 72–3, no. 3. The chronology and order of Theophilos' coinage has also been problematic, partly connected with the mentioned issue concerning his son Constantine. See the excellent survey of scholarship (up to 1990) in Penna 1990, 29–38, who argues for the order and dating proposed by Grierson DOC3.1406–15, with the summary of important criteria for dating at Penna 1990, 38. The chronology has been seconded by Füeg 2007, 25–8, based on a much larger pool of dies with only minor adjustments based on the new finds.
[1184] Penna 1990, 26–31. Dagron 1994, 113. Füeg 2007, 27.

is by far the most numerous among Theophilos' gold designs (issued between 830/1–40), replaced only in the 840s when his second son was born. Theophilos named his second son Michael, after his father, which conveys further dynastic concerns and can be compared to the Isaurian example – naming one's son after one's father was probably more common in general, but the Isaurians were the most recent dynasty to implement the practice to establish a dynastic continuity. Moreover, as Dagron demonstrated, the evidence from southern Italy reveals that Michael was addressed as *porphyrogennetos*.[1185] This may have been in part to solve the problem of homonymy,[1186] but the dynastic concerns must have played a role, and Michael was the first ruler to bear the epithet since the members of the Isaurian dynasty, as far as we can tell. Overall, the case of Theophilos reinforces the sensation that the Isaurians served as a primary example of a successful dynasty.

The memory of Theophilos as a just emperor became legendary already in Byzantium.[1187] In the most recent examination, Signes Codoñer concludes that the sources mentioning various episodes illustrating Theophilos' justice are too diverse in their provenance, language and style to be rejected simply as propaganda.[1188] Theophilos' first public act was the execution of Emperor Leo V's murderers, which was an attempt at washing the stain off his father's legitimacy, but also announced that justice would be the mark of Theophilos' reign.[1189] According to the Logothete tradition, the event took place at the Hippodrome.[1190] After the races concluded, Theophilos presented the proof of the deed – the broken candelabra that Leo V used trying to protect himself – and then asked the public '[w]hat does a man deserve who enters the Lord's temple and kills the Lord's anointed?', to which the members of the Senate replied '[h]e deserves death, lord!'.[1191] The conspirators were then brought and beheaded at the Sphendone in view of the public.[1192] This kind of moulding of public opinion and/or eliciting public support and justification for the act of violence resembles the accounts of Emperor Constantine V's delivering justice at the Hippodrome. It should be added, however, that other ac-

[1185] Dagron 1994, 113–14, with references to the evidence, preserved in texts originating from southern Italy.
[1186] Ibid., 114.
[1187] On the lasting image of Theophilos as a just ruler see Macrides 2004, 359ff., and ead. 2006, 325ff.
[1188] Signes Codoñer 2014, 452–60, with references.
[1189] Rosser 1972, 51–2.
[1190] Logothete A, ch. 130.22–36. The other version, preserved in Genesios, III.1, and Th.Cont. III. §1, portrays the scene in a similar manner, but taking place in the Magnaura hall, also conveying the impression that the emperor aimed for a high publicity. See Afinogenov 2001, 333, who considered the account as a literary construct; and most recently, Signes Codoñer 2014, 68–72, for a more detailed treatment of additional sources, who also rejected Afinogenov's arguments.
[1191] Logothete, ch. 130.26–9, ὁ εἰς ναὸν Κυρίου εἰσερχόμενος καὶ χριστὸν Κυρίου φανεύων, τίνος ἐστὶν ἔνοχος; […] ἄξιος θανάτου ἐστίν, ὦ δέσποτα; tr. Treadgold 1988, 271, with modified 'sire' into 'lord' [I.M.].
[1192] Logothete, ed. Wahlgren, ch. 130.29–32.

counts of Theophilos' justice differ in nature; he became known for highly public and efficient, ad hoc deliberation of justice among ordinary people, seemingly open to be approached by any one of his subjects during his regular Friday processions from the palace to the Blachernae, with not even the members of his family being protected from punishment by their status.[1193]

The wish for a close connection with the broader population is also conveyed in the context of Theophilos' two triumphs.[1194] The climax of the first triumph was the emperor's address from a podium set in front of the Chalke gate,[1195] the spot reserved for communicating important information to the general public, but not usually in an oral performance by the emperor himself. The arrangement included a great ceremonial cross in the middle, flanked by a golden organ and a golden and bejewelled throne; Theophilos sat on the throne and received gifts 'with gladness, thanking the populace, and making a speech himself on the successes of war'.[1196] The receptions and Hippodrome games took place the next day, including the display of prisoners and booty, and the largess which lasted 'for several days'.[1197] The distributions must have included the new *follis* representing, on the obverse, the half-length figure of Theophilos, wearing a *toupha* on his head and holding the labarum in his right hand;[1198] in addition to these military symbols associated with imperial triumph, the inscription on the reverse reads: 'O, Emperor Theophilos, you conquer!' (fig. 36).[1199] Thus, similarly to Constantine V, Theophilos advertised his triumphal image by means only of the lowest of denominations.

Celebrating his second triumph, it is said that Theophilos ordered 'that all the children of the City should come out to meet him, with crowns made from flowers'.[1200] He also organized the customary chariot races, and took the step 'which would have been unimaginable for his late Roman predecessors: he himself led the first race and, unsurprisingly, crowned his military success with a sporting victory'.[1201] This act testifies to Theophilos' commitment for eliciting popular support, and indeed seems to follow, and expand on, Constantine V's use of the Hippodrome.[1202] Theophilos was also the first emperor since Constantine V to celebrate two triumphs, and although these instances do not offer an

[1193] See the summary of exemplary instances in Rosser 1972, 55–9, and additional examples in Signes Codoñer 2014, 456–9.
[1194] *Three Treatises*, ed. and tr. Haldon, 146–51. McCormick 1986, 146–50.
[1195] *Three Treatises*, ed. and tr. Haldon, 148–51.
[1196] Ibid., tr. Haldon, 148–51.
[1197] Ibid., tr. Haldon, 150–1.
[1198] Toupha was a tuft of hair of animals used for decoration of ceremonial imperial helmets, *ODB*, III, 2100, s.v. 'Toupha'. The equestrian statue of Justinian at the Augusteion famously used to have a large one, which, incidentally, fell during Emperor Theophilos' reign, Logothete A, ch. 130.288–97.
[1199] DOC3.1, 413–5, 435–40, pl. xxiii–xxv, nos. 13–17.
[1200] *Three Treatises*, tr. Haldon, 150–1.
[1201] Reported by Logothete A, ch. 130.162–6. The quote is by McCormick 1986, 149–50. See also Karlin-Hayter 1987, who compares Theophilos and Michael as an emperor-charioteer with the example of the emperor Nero stressing that while negative portrayal came from the members of elite culture, and the church (later), the act would have been positively viewed by the wider population and the army.
[1202] Signes Codoñer 2014, 454.

unmistakeable testimony of Theophilos' consciously emulating either Leo III or Constantine V, it seems clear that Theophilos believed in the connection between iconoclast theology and military success. Having in mind the wider support and legendary status of Emperor Constantine V, it may be considered whether Theophilos aimed to signal the revival of the success of the Isaurian dynasty, whose longevity at least he had hoped to recreate.

The sense of continuity between the Isaurian and Amorian dynasties, especially concerning military matters, is hinted at in the already mentioned treatise of Constantine VII about the imperial expeditions. Describing the tradition, Constantine writes that the procedure 'was observed and put into practice up until the time of Michael the Christ-loving despot and of Bardas his uncle, the most fortunate *kaisar*'.[1203] The epithets sound like deriving from an official document, and in any case these lines must be based on material dating back to the time of Emperor Michael III's reign, presumably before the assassination of *kaisar* Bardas in 866. As is well known, numerous texts, especially histories, produced under Constantine VII worked hard to condemn the image of Michael III, and this might be the only instance in Constantine VII's corpus which preserves the original, positive, language of sources dealing with Michael. The text continues: 'this tradition having been handed down to them, that is to say Theopihlos and Michael […] such a tradition came down to them in the same way from earlier emperors. By "earlier", I mean those Isaurians who fell into the gravest error with regard to the Orthodox faith'.[1204] Note that the tracing of tradition goes back only as far as Michael II, and then emphatically connects with the Isaurians. In conclusion, we can say that, first, at least one of the sources informing this section derives from the time of Michael III and, second, it conveys a sense of dynastic awareness from the Amorian perspective, going back only until its progenitor. If the proposed sense of continuity between the Isaurians and Amorians belongs to the same document, it might suggest an influence from Theophilos' time.

In the last instance, it is necessary to briefly mention Iconoclast policy under Theophilos, as it pertains to the memory of the Isaurian rulers in the capital. Emperor Theophilos was the last emperor to pursue an iconoclastic policy, and he did so much more fervently than his two predecessors.[1205] The emperor issued two decrees in pursuit of this policy. The first prohibited the painting of icons, which finds parallels in the *Horoi* of 815 and 754.[1206] The second (issued in 833), arguably more important, forbade giving hospitality to those not in communion with the official church, with anyone disobeying

[1203] *Three Treatises*, tr. Haldon, 96.40–2; tr. Haldon, 97.
[1204] *Three Treatises*, tr. Haldon, 96.43–7; tr. Haldon, 97.
[1205] See Rosser 1972, 67–107, and more recently Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 392–404.
[1206] Th. Cont, III, §10, 142–5. For the *Horos* of 815, see Alexander 1953, 60, fg. 15; for the *Horos* of 754, see *ACO*, 762.1–5, and 764.1–6.

threatened by the confiscation of property.[1207] The *Appendix Ekloge*, probably published under Constantine V (as discussed in Chapter Two) included a similar stipulation,[1208] although there might not be any connection with Theophilos' decree. In any case, the sources suggest that the decrees were indeed observed in practice; the second one, in fact, marked the beginning of a more active persecution, which even extended beyond the capital.[1209] Among the numerous cases of violence, the most famous is the punishment imposed on the Palestinian monks, the brothers Theodore and Theophanes, whose faces were tattooed with iambic verses as a humiliation, and who were known thereafter as the *Graptoi* ('marked with writing').[1210] For the time being, it is important to stress that some of Theophilos' victims, like Theophanes Graptos and Michael the Synkellos,[1211] were still in prison when the emperor died, and received high ecclesiastical positions after the 'restoration of orthodoxy'. It was in the monastic milieu around these figures, in the *Lives* composed to their glorification, that the absolution of Theophilos negotiated by his widow Theodora was never accepted.[1212] Why Emperor Theophilos became a more fervent iconoclast is not entirely clear, but the commonly accepted interpretation puts forward the impact of his education and indoctrination during the time of Emperor Leo V, especially the role of John Grammatikos as Theophilos' tutor.[1213] Brubaker and Haldon also proposed a parallel with Constantine V: 'the father a soldier of relatively humble origins, the son brought up and educated in the more sophisticated and intellectually challenging context of the imperial household'.[1214]

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that Theophilos hoped to emulate the dynastic longevity of the famous eighth-century predecessors. He also believed in the link between the imperial triumph and Iconoclast doctrine, and may have connected with them more consciously, although that remains difficult to assess. It is reasonable to propose, however, that the memory of Leo III and Constantine V had been maintained, or, at the very least, not deliberately suppressed, which implies that when Theophilos died in 842,

[1207] Th. Cont, III, §10, 144–5. Rosser 1972, 79, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 394, n. 106, with further references.
[1208] See Ch. 2, n. 598.
[1209] Rosser 1972, 77–87, and Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 393–404.
[1210] See the detailed account of the Graptoi's case, and arguably the oldest surviving testimony, in the *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, 79–97. Theodore died in 841, while Theophanes was released after Theophilos' death and made the Metropolitan of Nikaia by the new patriarch Methodios. Theophanes died in 845, and was buried in the Chora monastery by Michael the Synkellos (see the next note). Sode 2001. Theodore, PmbZ #7526; Theophanes, PmbZ #8093.
[1211] On Michael the Synkellos, see Cunningham 1990, 1–17, and PmbZ #5059.
[1212] See below the sub-heading 'Absolution of Theophilos'.
[1213] Rosser 1972, 75–6, 98–107. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 392–3, 403–4. Signes Codoñer 2014, 30–1.
[1214] Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 392. Signes Codoñer 2014, 31, makes a similar parallel with Justinian I.

the positive memory of the Isaurians was still preserved inside the capital. It is noteworthy that, if Mango's conjecture is correct,[1215] Sergios the Confessor, possibly Photios' father, was exiled for writing a text against Michael II; a text which also included a section on 'lawless and abominable deeds of Kopronymos' (τὰ τοῦ Κοπρωνύμου ἀθέμιτα καὶ ἐβδελυγμένα ἔργα).[1216]

Termination of Iconoclasm (842–67)

Our understanding of the events after Emperor Theophilos' death on 20 January 842, that concluded with the solemn celebration of the restoration of icon-worship on 11 March 843, is based on a handful of mostly later sources which are 'not only biased, cryptic and incoherent, but also evasive'.[1217] This is the main reason why many questions remain difficult to answer satisfactorily and the lack of consensus on all but a few basic points, in spite of the vast amount of scholarship dedicated to the issue,[1218] which warrants Cormack's general observation on Iconoclasm that 'the number (and size) of books touching on Byzantine Iconoclasm […] has multiplied beyond all expectations, and, paradoxically, the concept has as a consequence become less rather than more transparent'.[1219] In short, after negotiations that lasted a year, a decision was reached to

[1215] Mango 1977.
[1216] Photios, *Bibliotheka*, §67, 99.
[1217] Karlin-Hayter 2006a, 65. Among the chronicles, we have George the Monk, 801–3, which is practically useless, and the tenth-century texts: Th.Cont. III. §40, IV. §§1–11, and Genesios, IV. §§1–5, with minor differences and shorter account, and the particularly brief treatment in the Logothete, ch. 131.3–13, which Karlin–Hayter 2001, 172, proposed represents a bulletin issued by the victors, the regency and the church. The richest material on the restoration is found in hagiography, which is too numerous to list here, but two deserve a mention. The treatment in the Narration of the translation of Patriarch Nikephoros' body (=*Narratio Nicephori*, *BHG* 1336), §§7–9, 122–4, by Theophanes the Presbyter, is considered as a valuable, and contemporary text. Gouillard 1967, 122, dated it to the late ninth century, but more recently Afinogenov 2004, 63, n. 2, places the composition before the death of Patriarch Methodios in 847, because he is referred to as still alive, that is, he is not referred as 'holy' or 'blessed', as in other sources from later period, for example, in *De Thophili absolutione*, 108.342. The somewhat earlier dating is further inferred from the *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, dated to the mid-860s by Cunningham 1991, 4–7, where a paragraph (§25, 100.7–10) is copied from the *Narratio Nicephori*, §7, 122.8–15. The second text is *The Acts of David, Symeon and George* (= *Acta*) §§26–30, which features the most detailed account of the restoration in any text. Although later in date, the consensus nowadays is that the *Acta* is a layered compilation of three different vitae, including texts ranging back to the mid-ninth century, and that the account of the restoration may be based on a contemporary tradition, Kazhdan 1984, 185–8; Abrahamse 1998, 146–7; Karlin-Hayter 2001, 173, n. 9, and ead. 2006, 363–4; Afinogenov 2004, 57. Some relevant details include a more accurate portrayal of emperor Michael III's young age compared to the other accounts, *Acta*, §29, tr. Domingo-Forasté 1998, 219, n. 380, or expressions suggesting contemporary composition, as argued by Kazhdan 1984, 185–8. Accordingly, the perceived value of this source, especially its earliest layer concerning the events about the restoration of orthodoxy, has moved from the scepticism of Gouillard 1967, 122, and Ševčenko 1977, 117. Finally, I should mention the texts composed to justify Emperor Theophilos' absolution, which are still under debate. See Afinogenov 2004, with the most recent edition and commentary of what he considers to be the oldest surviving tradition, and Karlin-Hayter 2006. A more complete list of sources can be found in the literature referenced in the following note.
[1218] Among the rich literature, see Bury 1912, 143–53. Gouillard 1967, 119–29. Mango 1977, 133–5. Afinogenov 1996, and id. 2004, 57–77. Zielke 1999, 216–30. Karlin-Hayter, 2001, ead., 2006a, ead., 2006b. Varona Codeso 2009, 59–96, focusing mainly on tenth-century accounts. Komatina 2014, 29–54. The treatment in Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 447–52, is rather brief (little over three pages), which is somewhat surprising considering the comprehensiveness of their volume, but I think this speaks about the complexity of the issue.
[1219] Cormack 2012, 471.

terminate Iconoclast policy, under the condition that Emperor Theophilos was given absolution and his name was kept in the liturgical diptychs. Patriarch John Grammatikos refused to agree to the change and was promptly deposed, presumably with a portion of the members of the Constantinopolitan clergy, while the monk Methodios was elected as the new patriarch. All this took place in an ecclesiastical synod in the capital, which seems to have kept a low profile, and enlisted support from monastic representatives outside the capital. The synod denied the iconoclast councils of 754 and 815 and reconfirmed the decisions of the council of Nikaia in 787. On 11 March 843, the change was commemorated in a feast that would become known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy.[1220]

One of the few consensus points is that the restoration was primarily, or exclusively, a political job,[1221] undertaken by Theodora, Theophilos' widow, and her associates, the guardians of under-aged Emperor Michael III:[1222] in the first place the *magistros* Theoktistos,[1223] *kanikleios* and logothete of the *dromos*,[1224] and one of the closest associates of the late emperor Theophilos; Theodora's brothers Bardas and Petronas;[1225] possibly the *magistros* Manuel;[1226] and one Sergios Nikitiates.[1227] These men (save Manuel) are also described as leaders of the senate in the *Acta*.[1228] Yet, arguably the most important question of motivation behind the termination of Iconoclasm, is still under debate. Already Bury established that the change must have been a result of complex negotiations between the reigning dynasty (including their supporters) and the rest of the aristocracy, in order to ensure the survival and stability of the Amorian dynasty which was in a vulnerable position with a female regent to a two-year old heir.[1229] Over the years, Bury's interpretation has been largely, but not universally accepted.[1230] I would only add that, in

[1220] On the commemorative procession for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, see Afinogenov 1999a, and id. 2004, 63–73, for the earliest history, and the excellent study by Flusin 2010, for the later period.
[1221] Among others, Mango 1977, 133–5. Zielke 1999, 224–7. Karlin-Hayter 2001. In this regard, perhaps the best evidence among the surviving sources is Narratio Nicephori, §§7–8, 122–3, which places in the forefront of the restoration Theodora's 'manly qualities', prudence and thoughtful understanding, without mentioning her piety at all, and mentions that Theodora consulted with the nobles before inviting the monks for the synod.
[1222] According to Th.Cont., III. §40, IV§1, Emperor Theophilos entrusted Theoktistos, Bardas, and the *magistros* Manuel as guardians of Michael and Theodora in his testament.
[1223] Theoktistos, PmbZ #8050.
[1224] *ODB*, II, 1101, s.v. 'Kanikleios'. ibid., II, 1247–8, s.v. 'Logothetes tou Dromou'.
[1225] Bardas, PmbZ #791; Petronas PmbZ# 5929.
[1226] The question of whether Manuel died in 838, as argued by Grégoire 1934, or survived to live for some time after 843 is still under debate. Mango 1977, 134, n. 7, questioned Grégoire's argument, as did Signes Codoñer 2013, following arguments similar to those in PmbZ #4707. Cf. Treadgold 2013, 148, n. 84, and Komatina 2014, 34, n. 25, who argue that Grégoire's conclusion is to be maintained.
[1227] Mango 1977, 134. Sergios, PmbZ #6664.
[1228] *The Acta*, §28; Eng. tr. Domingo-Forasté 1997, 216–7.
[1229] Bury 1912, 144–6.
[1230] Among scholars who endorse Bury's conclusions are Gouillard 1967, 119–29; Mango 1977, 133–5; Afinogenov 1996, and id. 2004, 57–77; Karlin-Hayter, 2001, ead., 2006b. Komatina 2014, 29–54. Cf. Zielke 1999, 225–7.

my opinion, Bury's conclusion is to be maintained and can be corroborated from a wider pool of sources.[1231]

The remainder of this chapter concerns itself with several aspects relevant to this issue. First, I look at the evidence for public discourse concerning the Iconoclast emperors in the early post-Iconoclast period (843–7), which suggests that there was no condemnation of any of the rulers whatsoever, and contrast this evidence with that present in works that were not meant for public delivery from the same period. These, by contrast, maintain and expand on the polemic established in the early ninth-century. I then examine the active promotion of Patriarch Nikephoros' cult in the same period, asking whether this campaign may also have increased the visibilty and impact of his writings against Constantine V: his treatises were incorporated in George the Monk's iconophile chronicle after 843. Next, I examine the absolution of Emperor Theophilos and the hostile discourse against this emperor present in hagiographical texts that I believe to be related in several respects with the extraordinary case of disinterment and the public humiliation of Emperor Constantine V's body, which is analyzed in considerable detail toward the end of this chapter.

Public and private discourse concerning the Iconoclast rulers during Methodios' patriarchate (843–7)

Although our sources for the period are problematic, a few that are reasonably presumed to be contemporary, and almost certainly composed for public delivery, do allow us to deduce some characteristics of the public discourse following the termination of Iconoclasm in 843, albeit largely from the perspective of a narrow group around the patriarch Methodios.[1232]

The most important aspect to note is that, contrary to what one might expect, there is no evidence that any of the Iconoclast rulers was condemned in public discourse during Methodios' patriarchate (843–7). As Gouillard stressed, no emperor of the Iconoclast period, or previously, was anathematized;[1233] in fact, the *Synodikon*, probably originally

[1231] There is no space to fully engage with the arguments against Bury's interpretation, but a brief comment is in order. One of the major arguments advanced by Zielke 1999, 225–7, is that there is no evidence that the regency was in a weak position, with which I disagree. Besides evidence of a power-struggle already advanced by Karlin-Hayter 2001, 171–4, and ead. 2006a, 60, we also hear that the regency announced amnesty for those exiled or imprisoned under Theophilos, *The Acta*, §26, 243; *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, §25, 100; *De Theophili absolutione*, 98.168–173; Ps-Symeon, 647.15–18. As Afinogenov 2004, 57, n. 31, stressed, there are no contradictions in the accounts, and hence very little reason to dismiss them. Furthermore, according to *The Acta* §27, 244, the regency also offered financial compensation to the exiled. These concessions are often employed during the transitions of power, and they do not reveal a strong position.

[1232] These include Patriarch Methodios' *Sermon on Holy Images*, the *Narratio Nicephori*, and the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, the document that has been read annually during the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Although we know this document only from a later compilation, it is accepted that it preserves the original section, ascribed to Methodios, Gouillard 1967, 141–53; Afinogenov 2004, 147.

[1233] Gouillard 1967, 124–5.

authored by Methodios, does not even mention any of the emperors, and contains anathemas only against Iconoclast patriarchs.[1234] The situation is similar in Methodios' *Sermon on Holy Images* (c. 843), which focuses on defending the theology of icon-veneration in an exceptionally apologetic tone.[1235] One of the main objectives for Methodios is to de-legitimize the iconoclast council in Hiereia (754); one detail seems particularly revealing here. Renouncing the council as 'headless',[1236] Methodios emphasises the absence of any of the patriarchs from the other major sees (Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem), and adds that 'even the one [whom] he had made [patriarch] turned around and, throwing himself down, killed himself',[1237] referring to Patriarch Constantine II and Emperor Constantine V.[1238] I believe this detail suggests that Constantine V was a very well-known figure, and hints that Methodios shied away from publicly condemning the famous Iconoclast emperor. The most direct evidence of Constantine V's popularity comes from the *Life of Nikephoros*, composed during Methodios' patriarchate, in which the author engages in an imagined discussion with those 'who still pay honour to the dogmatic [decrees] of Constantine [V]'.[1239]

The *Narratio Nicephori* may be the most revealing evidence for the fact that discourse about the Iconoclast rulers depended on the level of publicity. In the historic section of the *Narratio*, Emperor Leo V is condemned in a manner recognizable from the anti-Iconoclast polemic of the early ninth century.[1240] In Patriarch Methodios' address to the body of Nikephoros, delivered away from the capital, Leo V is referred to – but not by name – as the 'ruler estranged from God' who suffered a just divine punishment for exiling Patriarch Nikephoros.[1241] In the final address to the body of Nikephoros, delivered in the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, there is no mention of Leo V, and the only reference to the exile is a vague praise of Nikephoros for triumphing over 'trials and dangers'.[1242]

[1234] *Synodikon*, 54–7. Interestingly, the early thirteenth-century manuscript containing the *Synodikon*, Scorialensis gr. Ψ-II-20, includes a fourteenth-century marginal note in the section where the anathemas were pronounced, and adds anathema for 'Constantine Kopronymos Isaurian', *Synodikon*, 54, n. 255. Gouillard 1967, 18, on the manuscript and the tentative dating of the note.
[1235] Methodios, *Sermon on Holy Images*, esp. §§2–8, 182–9. For dating and further references, Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 258–9, n. 68.
[1236] Ibid., §8, 187–8. This theme is present in several contemporary sources, e.g. *Life of Nikephoros*, 202. George the Monk, 754.1–757.8 (= Coisl. 305, fols. 332v.9–335r.9).
[1237] Methodios, *Sermon on Holy Images*, §8, 187, Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅν ἐποίησεν ἐστράφη καὶ ῥίψας ἀπέκτεινεν ἑαυτόν. The line is puzzling, as noted by Afinogenov 1997, 194, n. 22. Methodios seems to be saying that even the iconoclast patriarch-elect turned against the heresy, and in doing so, doomed himself.
[1238] It is probably not a coincidence that George the Monk, 754.1–757.8 (= Coisl. 305, fols. 332v.9–335r.9), devotes much attention to the election of the patriarch Constantine II by the namesake emperor, denouncing it as illegal.
[1239] Life of Nikephoros, 191–2; tr. Fisher 1998, 107.
[1240] *Narratio Nicephori*, §§2–4.
[1241] Ibid., §11, 125.31–126.4.
[1242] Ibid., §13, 127.30–128.1. See below, subheading 'The cult of Patriarch Niekphoros'.

Our limited evidence suggests that ecclesiastical officials at the time of Methodios' patriarchate not only did not condemn any of the Iconoclast rulers, but avoided even mentioning their names, suggesting that there may have been a *damnatio memoriae* by silence but that no Iconoclast emperor was publicly condemned in the early post-iconoclast period (843–7).[1243] This is to be expected to an extent, since the wife and son of the last Iconoclast ruler were in power, but I believe it also reveals that the eighth-century Iconoclast rulers, as well as Theophilos himself, were still popular with the Constantinopolitan masses.[1244] There is some broader evidence in support of this proposal. Investigating how the authorities justified the deposition of the last Iconoclast patriarch John Grammatikos, Karlin-Hayter concludes that the sources reveal 'a public that was, at the very least, tolerant of Iconoclasm'.[1245] Furthermore, numismatic and sigillographic evidence suggests that the authorities were slow to announce the changes introduced in 843. The first *nomismata* issued after Theophilos' death featured a 'dynastic' design, with Theodora on the obverse and Michael and Thekla, the eldest surviving child of Theophilos and Theodora, on the reverse (fig. 37).[1246] The seals employed in this same period retained the design introduced by Leo III, with the cross potent and the Trinitarian formula (fig. 38).[1247] According to Füeg's statistical analysis, the coin with the bust of Christ on the obverse and Michael and Theodora on the reverse (fig. 39), which symbolically announced the change of religious doctrine and is often associated with the restoration of the image of Christ at the Chalke gate, was probably not issued before 850.[1248] Even if the coin was issued earlier, as Grierson argued – although largely from his impression that it seemed impossible that the coin was not struck right away in 843 – it must have been a limited series, because the 'dynastic' design survives in much greater numbers.[1249] Moreover, the bust of Christ was not introduced on seals until Michael III's sole reign (856–67).[1250] Finally, for reasons which are not yet understood nor satisfacto-

[1243] According to our surviving evidence, the only ruler publicly denounced in a church council during the Iconoclast period was the empress Eirene in 815, but she was not anathematized, Alexander 1953, 59, fgs. 7–10.
[1244] See the similar opinions, although without much evidence in support, in Karlin-Hayter 2001, 175; ead. 2006a, 56. Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 449.
[1245] Karlin-Hayter 2006, 371.
[1246] DOC3.1, 454, 456–7, 461–2, pl. xxvii, nos. 1a.1–1d.4. Thekla, PmbZ #7261.
[1247] *DOS*6, 78, nos. 47.1–2.
[1248] DOC3.1, 454–5, 458, 463, pl. xxviii, nos. 2.1–6. Grierson, ibid., 454–5, 463, argued that the ideological importance of the coin means it must have been struck in 843 to commemorate the restoration of orthodoxy. Both Penna 1990, 40–2, and Füeg 2007, 29–30, 168–9, table 4.2, rejected Grierson's dating on numismatic and historical evidence. Following the statistical analysis of a large sample of coins, Füeg 2007, 30, concludes that 'the variations in the design, legends and number of dies [of the 'dynastic' type] favor a longer period of issuance for issue 1. When the date of the change in issues is interpolated with the help of the statistics, then issue 2 [the bust of Christ] would have been introduced in 850'.
[1249] DOC3.1, 454–8. Füeg 2007, 29–30, pl. 74–6.
[1250] DOS6, 80–2, nos. 49.1–3.

rily explained, the regency, and later Michael III himself, did not introduce any new design for the *follis*, maintaining the type introduced by Emperor Theophilos.[1251] Normally, each change of government was accompanied by a new coin design, no matter how minute the change might be, and coins were often employed for disseminating ideological messages. Keeping in mind the surviving quantity of the *nomismata* portraying dynastic continuity, I would add that the dynastic and ideological concern of maintaining Theophilos' memory was at least not in opposition to potential other, more practical motives. Although we are not in a position to assess the effects of this move on the empire's populace,[1252] we can be certain that the memory of Theophilos as a triumphant emperor was maintained through the most wide-reaching denomination for another twenty-five years after his death. Finally, it is worth recalling that the practice of retaining the portrait of deceased rulers on coins was introduced by Constantine V, and revived by Theophilos himself.

If the evidence for public discourse suggests that there was no condemnation of the Iconoclast rulers, the picture is very different in texts that were probably not used in public, and/or had more limited circulation, at least at this early stage after the termination of Iconoclasm. In these more private texts, Emperor Constantine V continued to be portrayed as the arch-Iconoclast tyrant, precursor of the Antichrist. The now lost history of Sergios the Confessor composed in 828, began, as Photios tells us, with Emperor Michael II, but then went back to describe the 'lawless and abominable deeds of Kopronymos'.[1253] The *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, composed by the monk Theosteriktos before 840,[1254] is characterized by a vicious polemic, especially against Constantine V,[1255] in which the author employs patterns recognizable from the anti-Iconoclast polemic of the early-ninth century. Thus, Leo is treated comparatively mildly – he is said to have usurped the throne (from Theodosios III), and he is marked as the instigator of

[1251] The first new design in the east was introduced after Michael had Basil crowned as his co-ruler, DOC3.1, 455–6, 459, 466–7, pl. xxix, nos. 8.3–4. Grierson points out that there is no precedent for a 25-year gap in minting of copper coins, and suggests that either Theophilos' *folles* had been struck in such huge volumes that there was no need for new ones, which would still be contrary to the practice, or that Theodora and later Michael continued to strike Theophilos' design in the east until 866, DOC3.1, 415, 455–6. Important to note is that copper coinage in Michael's name had been struck in Syracuse, DOC3.1, Grierson, 459–60, 468–9, pl. xxix, nos. 12–13, and even in Cherson, ibid., 460, 269–70, pl. xxix, nos. 14–15, which may hint at the ideological reasons for maintaining Theophilos' memory. Penna 1990, 214, however, suggested that the design might have been kept for practical and economic reasons, that is, for the adjustment to the new monetary practices, since Theophilos revolutionized the copper coinage.

[1252] Judging by the consistent usage of coins as a metaphor during iconoclast controversy, a widespread presence of coinage in the minds of the Byzantines may be assumed, even if the surviving texts cannot be taken to represent majority of the population. Some of the examples include *ACO*, 608.11–20 (the sixth session of the council of Nikaia II); *Life of St Stephen the Younger*, §55; Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos I*, 276 C–D; *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §28, xxiv; *Life of Tarasios*, §63; Mansi XVI, 388 C–D (the eighth session of the Council of 869/70).

[1253] Photios, *Bibliotheka*, §67, 99. See the recent discussion about Sergios' work in Treadgold 2013, 90–100.

[1254] Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 222. Niketas, PmbZ #8393.

[1255] *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §28, xxiii ff.

Iconoclasm[1256] – but Constantine is introduced as being much worse than his father, accused of destroying the relics of saints, forbidding the use of the word 'saint', and being a Christian only in semblance, but in fact of Jewish mind.[1257] Depicting Constantine's enmity towards the Theotokos, Theosteriktos includes the earliest testimony of the anecdote of how Constantine apparently demonstrated his point against addressing intercessions to the Theotokos.[1258] It is noteworthy, although not surprising, that the author reserves the worst polemic, the δυσωδία topos,[1259] against Constantine in response to the emperor's supposed aim to completely destroy the institution of monasticism.[1260] It is clear that the author designed his narrative for this purpose, since he arranges the infamous story of Constantine defecating in the baptismal font in this section,[1261] although chronologically it belongs to Leo III's reign. Theosteriktos also elaborates on the κόπρος theme, including a claim that Constantine enjoyed smearing himself with animal excrement and ordered those in his entourage to do the same.[1262]

The first version of George the Monk testifies that the *Life of Niketas of Medikion* enjoyed immediate circulation in Constantinople,[1263] as George quotes paragraphs from the *Life* in his chapter on Constantine V.[1264] Apart from this *Life*, George's account is largely a compilation of sections from Theophanes, Patriarch Nikephoros, and the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*. As the *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, George devotes much energy to defend monastic life. He includes the well-known stories of Constantine V's actions against monks that he copied from his sources, and arranges them just before Constantine's infamous death, which is copied from Nikephoros and leaves an impression that the emperor's eternal condemnation comes especially as a punishment for his actions against the monks.[1265] More interestingly, at the end of the chapter on Emperor Claudius, George also inserts a lengthy excursus defending the virtues of monastic life

[1256] Ibid., §27, xxiii.
[1257] Ibid., §28, xxiv.
[1258] Ibid., §28, xxiv. The emperor supposedly emptied a bag of gold and compared the value of the bag before and after emptying it with Theotokos before and after giving birth to Christ. See the discussion in Gero 1977, 143–51.
[1259] Gero 1977, 169–75.
[1260] *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §29, xxiv. This notion is further reinforced in the following chapter (§30), where it is claimed that the monasticism recovered under Empress Eirene.
[1261] Ibid., §29, xxiv.
[1262] Ibid., §29, xxiv.
[1263] The first version of George the Monk is the earliest post-843 historical text. It is preserved in the manuscript Coislin gr. 305, dated by Afinogenov 1999b, id. 2004, to the patriarchate of Methodios. The pages from the later, published, version, George the Monk, 750–65, correspond with Coisl. 305, fols. 331r–338v. The differences between Coisl. 305 and later version noted by de Boor and Wirth in the last section of the apparatus (under ms. P) are quite reliable, with only one slip that I could identify (see below). In short, the early version tends to be longer than the later one and overall include more extensive passages from George's sources, but the additional material overall does not make a significant qualitative difference. See further below.
[1264] For example, the opening lines of Constantine's reign, and the anecdote with the purse of gold, *Life of Niketas of Medikion*, §28, xxiv; Cois. 305, 331r.13–5, 331r.28–331v.4 (=George the Monk, 750.16–8, 751.7–16).
[1265] Coisl. 305, 338r.21–338v.5 (=George the Monk, 764.1–11), copied from Nikephoros, *Antirrhetikos III*, 521 D–524 A.

against Constantine V.[1266] George states that he writes in response to those who reject and despise monastic life – the newly revealed Jews, 'following their God-hated spiritual teacher Kopronymos' (κατὰ τὸν θεοστυγῆ μυσταγωγὸν Κοπρώνυμον).[1267] This lengthy excursus offers several surprising exempla. George begins by quoting from the standard authorities like Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus or John Chrysostom.[1268] In the second half, however, George uses the teaching of Plato and Socrates as examples of virtuous, divine living.[1269] George proceeds with other non-Christian figures, invoking the Brahmans of India (example of restrained life),[1270] the Scythian philosopher Anarchasis (example of abstinence and chastity),[1271] and the centaur Chiron (a teacher of right-eousness and purity).[1272] Promoting further the virtue of chastity and restraining from passions, George brings forth the examples of Agesilaus (who restrained himself from the desire for a beautiful young man),[1273] Alexander the Great (who refused Darius' daughters),[1274] and Cyrus the Great (who refused a beautiful slave-woman).[1275] One gets the impression that the excursus targeted the lay audience of the capital who had received some form of education in classicising motifs, and is rather exceptional in this period in offering ancient, non-Christian figures as positive examples.

Two more details deserve a brief mention. Just like Patriarch Methodios in his sermon, George gives much attention to the events around the council of Hiereia – one notes that the account in Coisl. 305 is longer than the later version.[1276] Unlike Methodios, George stresses that the election of Patriarch Constantine II by Emperor Constantine V was unlawful,[1277] and includes the scenes of the patriarch's torture and execution.[1278] The second detail pertains to the depiction of Emperor Constantine V's death. George opens with a paragraph from Theophanes, and then inserts different sections from Nikephoros regarding violence against monks before concluding with the tyrant's death.[1279] In the final section, George leaves out the scene in which the emperor

[1266] Coisl. 305, fols. 154r–167v (= George the Monk, 338–64).
[1267] Coisl. 305, fol. 154r.15–20 (quote at fol. 154r.15–6), with only minor difference compared to the later version, George the Monk, 338.18-339.1. Incidentally, this may be the oldest surviving instance of the notorious Kopronymos nickname used for Constantine V tout court, which is omitted in the first version of the chapter on Constantine himself, Coisl. 305, 331r.12, but is added in the later, George the Monk, 750.15–6 (Note that this omission is also not signalled in the apparatus). On Constantine V's nicknames, see Gero 1977, 169–75.
[1268] Basil, Coisl. 305, fol., 154v.10ff. (= George the Monk, 339.21ff.), Gregory, Coisl. 305, fols. 158r.9–22. (= George the Monk, 348.21–349.8); Chrysostom, Coisl. 305, fols. 158r.23ff. (= George the Monk, 349.9ff.).
[1269] Coisl. 305, fol. 161v.3ff. (= George the Monk, 356.4ff.).
[1270] Coisl. 305, fol. 162v.7–8 (= George the Monk, 358.6–8).
[1271] Coisl. 305, fol. 162v.9–19 (= George the Monk, 358.8–17).
[1272] Coisl. 305, fol. 162v. 20–6 (= George the Monk, 358.17–359.1).
[1273] Coisl. 305, fol. 163v.7–10 (= George the Monk, 360.13–5).
[1274] Coisl. 305, fol. 163v.10–14 (= George the Monk, 360.15–8).
[1275] Coisl. 305, fol. 163v.14–22 (= George the Monk, 360.18–361.2).
[1276] Compare Coisl. 305, fols. 332v.9–335r.9, with George the Monk, 754.1–757.8.
[1277] Coisl. 305, fol. 334r.30–5 (= George the Monk, 755–6, apparatus).
[1278] Coisl. 305, fol. 334v.5ff. (= George the Monk, 756.8ff.).
[1279] Coisl. 305, fol. 336v.16ff. (= George the Monk, 760.10ff.).

sought help 'from our faith' and asked the priests who were near him 'to sing the sacred hymns of the Christians', which the priests refuse.[1280] The decision to omit this section was a very deliberate choice since George copied the lines before and after, so it is worth considering whether the omission could have been influenced by the contemporary issue of Theophilos' absolution (below), in which penitence before death was the condition for a pardon. Emperor Constantine's portrayal was certainly nothing like the stories describing Theophilos kissing icons, but it did represent a kind of admission of sin at least, and may be remotely related to the more contemporary issue.

The discrepancy between public and more private discourses concerning the Iconoclast emperors is considerable. Besides reflecting concerns of the ruling dynasty, the evidence here collected may further point to the lasting popularity of Leo III, Constantine V, and Theophilos. Furthermore, the early circulation of these polemical texts, as attested by George the Monk, may indicate that the circle of Patriarch Methodios had a hand in this,[1281] and suggest that the church actively supported such circulation. This is of course not surprising, but it is worth stressing in terms of efforts to push these narratives into the public sphere, which, I believe, played a role in the eventual public condemnation of Emperor Constantine V.

Promoting restored orthodoxy: The cult of Patriarch Nikephoros

Restored orthodoxy was promoted, on the one hand, by condemning Iconoclast doctrine, its ecclesiastical leaders (in the first place, John Grammatikos) and de-legitimizing the Iconoclast councils of Hiereia (754) and at Hagia Sophia (815); on the other, this promotion entailed defending the theology of icon-veneration and glorifying its martyrs and champions.[1282] Among the latter, Patriarch Nikephoros takes the principal place, as his cult was intensively promoted during Methodios' patriarchate.[1283] The patriarch himself commissioned the *Life of Nikephoros* (c. 845–7) from Ignatios the Deacon,[1284] and around the same time, a selection of Nikephoros' works was compiled,[1285] although scholars point out that there is little evidence of its initial wider circulation.[1286] Nikephoros is also one of the very few contemporary figures to appear in illuminated psalter

[1280] Coisl. 305, fol. 338v.6–20 (= George the Monk, 764,14–765.6). Nikephoros III, *Antirrhetikos*, PG 100, 505 B–D.
[1281] Afinogenov 2006.
[1282] Methodios, *Sermon on Holy Images*, esp. §§2–8, 182–9. *Synodikon*, 54-7. See further this heading.
[1283] It should be stressed that part of the motivation for Nikephoros' promotion was the so-called 'Stoudite schism', on which see Komatina 2014, 62–80, but this does not interfere with the arguments here advanced.
[1284] Ševčenko 1977, 123–5. Efthymiadis 1991, 82–3.
[1285] Nikephoros' works are mentioned vaguely in the *Life of Nikephoros*, 209, and *Narratio Nicephori*, §13, 128, refers to them as guidance for salvation. See Featherstone 1997, xxiv–v, xxviii, n. 44, with further references, who wondered whether Methodios collected the writings during the translation of Nikephoros' body.
[1286] Featherstone 1997, xxiv–v, and n. 40, notes that the instance in the *Life* is vague, which really is, and that the circulation was probably very limited. He further argues that the historical sections in George the Monk, our best evidence of early circulation at least of the *Antirrhetikos III*, were taken independently (seconded by Afinogenov

books from this period.[1287] Across texts and media, Nikephoros is glorified for his opposition to the iconoclast reversal, suffering exile and remaining steadfast in defence of icon-veneration and orthodoxy until his death in 828. The central event in the sources is the Iconoclast council in 815.[1288] In the marginal psalters, an image of Nikephoros with the image of Christ in his hand and positioned above or beside the representation of the council in 815, accompanies Ps. 25(26): 5, 'I hated the assembly of evil doers, and with ungodly I cannot sit' (fig. 40).[1289] In Ignatios' lengthy *Life of Nikephoros*, more than half of the text is devoted to the council,[1290] and the discourse overall has a marked tenor of warfare and triumph.[1291] The section that introduces Emperor Leo V into the narrative concludes by presenting him as being worse than Sennacherib, Rabshakeh and Nebuzaradan, a selection of exempla that conveys an impression of the church being under siege.[1292] Later, the emperor assaults Nikephoros, who is 'without allies or weapons',[1293] and puts on '[Heracles'] lionskin against the Church'. [1294] Before confronting the emperor, Nikephoros gives a speech to his allies, comparing the situation with warfare;[1295] he defends the church armed with knowledge,[1296] and with leonine courage and fierceness;[1297] he is hailed as 'the bulwark of the Church' (τοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας προβόλου),[1298] and 'steadfast keep of Orthodoxy' (πύργον στερρὸν ὀρθοδοξίας).[1299] During the council, several members of the defeated party are thrown face down and 'the vulgar mob tread upon their neck'.[1300] On the other hand, the anti-iconoclast poem preserved in the Pantokrator Psalter hails Nikephoros as 'trampling upon the hostile head of […] Diosdotus[1301] […] chieftain of the heretical phalanx', and 'crushing the

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2002), and points that even Photios mentions only the *Breviarium* among Nikephoros' works. Featherstone's argument remains solid, but it should be noted that he does not mention the testimony from the *Narratio*, and that there is some evidence that Nikephoros' work has been used for the revised version of the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, on which see most recently the discussion with references in Afinogenov 2014, 18–22, including a few additional examples adduced from the Slavonic translation of the text. It is also noteworthy that in a letter written from exile, Patriarch Photios, *Letters*, §98, 134.39–56, shows awareness of Nikephoros' condition and his works.

[1287] On the so-called 'marginal psalters' – *Khludov*, *Pantokrator* 61, and Parisinus gr. 20 – see Ševčenko 1975, a detailed study by Corrigan 1992, and Brubaker and Haldon 2001, 43–7, with additional references.

[1288] *Life of Niekphoros*, 163–205. *Narratio Nicephori*, §§2–5.

[1289] *Khludov*, 23v (fig. 37). *Pantokrator* 61, 16r. For a detailed analysis of these illustrations and how they interact with text and other images in the manuscript, see Corrigan 1992, 27–33, 74–5, 113–6. See also Ševčenko 1975, 49–50.

[1290] Forty-two pages in de Boor's edition (163–205), out of seventy-eight in total (139–217). Moreover, since some of the sections before (e.g. Nikephoros' education, 149–51) and after (positive comparison with famous figures of the past, 210–4) are also connected with the council, one could make a case that the narrative was structured around it.

[1291] See the examples at *Life of Nikephoros*, 168–171, 173, 188–91, 197–8, 206, 210, some of which are treated below. See also *Narratio Nicephori*, §3, 117–8.

[1292] *Life of Nikephoros*, 162.

[1293] Ibid., 169; tr. Fisher 1998, 80.

[1294] *Life of Nikephoros*, 189; tr. Fisher 1998, 104.

[1295] *Life of Nikephoros*, 168–9.

[1296] Ibid., 210.

[1297] Ibid., 193.14.

[1298] Ibid., 214–5, tr. Fisher 1998, 108.

[1299] This quote is from the anti-iconoclast iambic poem preserved in the *Pantokrator* 61, 16r, ed. and tr. Ševčenko 1975, 43–4.

[1300] *Life of Nikephoros*, 204, tr. Fisher 1998, 123.

[1301] A pun on the name of the Iconoclast patriarch Theodotos ('the gift of God'), see Ševčenko 1975, 44–5.

abominable neck of the ferocious Lion [i.e. Leo V]',[1302] while in the Khludov Psalter, Nikephoros is depicted trampling the neck of the last iconoclast patriarch John Gramatikos (fig. 41).[1303] It seems clear that the figure *and* name of Patriarch Nikephoros ('victory-bringer'),[1304] embodied the triumph over Iconoclasm, and he remained one of the most important figures for the patriarchate in the later period. Writing from exile in 870, Patriarch Photios compared his situation with that of Nikephoros and extolled the outlined qualities by referring to him as 'the champion' (τὸν ἀθλητήν), and 'the great and truly *bringer of victory*' (τὸν μέγαν καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς Νικηφόρον), a pun on the name Nikephoros.[1305]

The most public event in the promotion of Nikephoros' cult was the translation of his body back to Constantinople in March 847. The initiative came from Patriarch Methodios,[1306] who personally led the delegation of 'clergymen together with priests, monks and a multitude of people', to the monastery of St Theodore where Nikephoros had been buried.[1307] Methodios embraced the tomb and delivered the customary ritual address, 'as if to a living'.[1308] He opened by comparing Nikephoros to John Chrysostom, who was a perfect model for the occasion; Nikephoros too, Methodios stressed, showed boldness, suffered the deprivation of the throne, exile and death in a foreign land.[1309] Further, Methodios begs Nikephoros to allow the translation of his body so that people in his city can rejoice, as did the people in earlier days when Chrysostom's body was received.[1310] In the second part of the address, Methodios informs Nikephoros of the restoration of orthodoxy; unlike the 'ruler estranged from God' who had him exiled, the emperors of today are pious and close to God.[1311] After the address, Nikephoros' 'completely intact' relics were transferred to the capital where the seven-year old emperor Michael, leading the highest-ranking dignitaries, received the casket, which they carried on their shoulders to Hagia Sophia, where the body was displayed for three days.[1312] Finally, the body was transported in a solemn nocturnal procession to the church of the Holy Apostles and interred in a newly built tomb on 13 March, the day of Nikephoros' exile.[1313] The final address to the body of Nikephoros, which was in all likelihood delivered

[1302] Ed. and tr. Ševčenko 1975, 43–4.
[1303] Khludov Paslter, fol. 51v, Corrigan 1992, 27–61.
[1304] The association invoked by Theophanes the Presbyter, below, n. 1316.
[1305] Photios, *Letters*, §98, 134.41–4,
[1306] *Narratio Nicephori*, §§9–10, 124–5.
[1307] Ibid., §11, 125.18–9. The location of the monastery remains unclear, Fisher 1998, 118, n. 404 with references.
[1308] *Narratio Nicephori*, §11, 125.22.
[1309] Ibid., §11, 125.22–8.
[1310] Ibid., §11, 125.28–31.
[1311] Ibid., §11, 125.31–126.6.
[1312] Ibid., §12, 126.17–31.
[1313] Ibid., §§12–3, 127–8. The description of the imperial procession to the church of the Holy Apostles on Easter Monday in De Cer. I, ch. 10, 76–7, implies that Nikephoros' tomb was outside the sanctuary.

by the author of the *Narratio*, Theophanes the Presbyter, is rather vague (which was certainly deliberate).[1314] The author ranks Nikephoros in the company of the patriarchs, a number of whom had been buried in the Holy Apostles,[1315] and adds that 'appropriately named, together with them you carry victory against the trials and dangers that have risen up against you'.[1316] The trials are left unspecified, and although everyone was surely aware of what was being alluded to, to my mind this detail suggests that the author was careful to avoid any mention of the imperial role in the persecution, and stands in contrast with the more direct condemnation of Leo V in both the 'historic section' of the document and Methodios' address, which was delivered away from the capital.[1317] These lines probably also implied another reference to John Chrysostom (buried in the sanctuary of the church), who was a perfect model for Nikephoros as a bishop who had opposed the figures in power including the imperial family, and overcome similar trials (as stressed by Methodios in his address). Regarding Chrysostom's portrait in Hagia Sophia, Cormack argued that the late antique patriarch 'would be an obvious choice to convey the suggestion that the power of church leaders should be re-established after a period of domination under the Iconoclastic emperors'.[1318]

We can conclude that Nikephoros was glorified by Patriarch Methodios and his circle as the foremost champion and protector of restored orthodoxy, and as a new Chrysostom. Such promotion of Nikephoros helped delegitimize the iconoclast council in 815, which was one of the aims of the church at the time.[1319] It also increased the overall prestige of Nikephoros, and it may have increased the importance attached to his writings. Although there is not much evidence of a wider circulation of his works, in the last section of the address to the body of Nikephoros, Theophanes the Presbyter informs Nikephoros that the people keep his eloquent instructions for salvation preserved in his many books.[1320] More importantly, the chronicle of George the Monk, which became exceptionally popular, includes long sections from Nikephoros' *Antirrhetikos III* against Constantine V, even quoting Nikephoros by name.[1321]

[1314] *Narratio Nicephori*, §13, 127–8.
[1315] The patriarchs who we know were buried in the church include John Chrysostom (p. 398–403), buried in the sanctuary, De Cer. I, ch. 10, 77; Flavian (p. 446–9), Grierson 1962, 6, n. 26; Kyriakos (p. 595–606), Chronicon Paschale, 697.5–9; and probably Sergios (p. 610–38), see De Cer. II ch. 30, 630–1, concerning the ceremonial for the funeral of a patriarch mentions the case of Sergios, relating that the senators partook in the procession until the church of the Holy Apostles. De Cer. I, ch. 10, 76–7, mentions the tombs of John Chrysostome, Gregory of Nazianzos (interred during the sole reign of Constantine VII), Nikephoros himself, and Methodios.
[1316] Narratio Nicephori, §13, 127.30–128.1, ὡς φερωνύμως σὺν ἐκείνοις τὰ νικτήρια φέρων καὶ τὰ γέρα κατὰ τῶν ἐπαναστάντων σοι πειρασμῶν καὶ κινδύνων.
[1317] *Narratio Nicephori*, §§2–5, (historic section against Leo V), §11, 125 (Methodios' address).
[1318] Cormack 1981, 138.
[1319] See above, n. 1282.
[1320] *Narratio Nicephori*, §13, 128.6–8.
[1321] Coisl. 305, 336v.33–4 (=George the Monk, 760.18–761.1), Περὶ οὗ καὶ ὁ θεῖος Νικηφόρος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοιάδε φησίν.

Not long after the solemn burial of Nikephoros in the church of the Holy Apostles, the remains of Constantine V would be removed from the same church complex and ritually humiliated in a highly public performance, and it is interesting to consider whether Nikephoros' polemic against Constantine V played a role in the public condemnation of the Iconoclast ruler.

Absolution of Emperor Theophilos

As outlined in the introduction to this section, the termination of Iconoclasm was the result of tense negotiations. The contemporary *Narratio Nicephori* states that Theodora initiated the restoration to make 'her reign safe'.[1322] Additional evidence, however, suggests that the empress initiated the change reluctantly,[1323] and one reason at least seems obvious: she and her advisers were aware that the termination of Iconoclasm inevitably had to entail branding it as a heresy, potentially stigmatizing the dynastic legacy with a delegitimizing factor.[1324] Thus, the termination was instituted under the condition that the late emperor Theophilos was given absolution, and his name preserved in the liturgical diptychs.[1325] As several scholars have argued, however, much as the absolution was a political decision, it needed a justification.[1326] Before proceeding I should say that while the narratives of Theophilos' absolution survive only in sources dated after Michael III's assassination in 867,[1327] I endorse the assessment that the texts were originally prepared in 843.[1328] Several versions of (almost certainly invented) stories of Theophilos' deathbed penitence survive, involving Theodora and/or Theoktistos, and present Theophilos as kissing an icon before departing.[1329] Portraying Theophilos repenting before his death was a necessary condition of overcoming the canonical issue of giving

[1322] *Narratio Nicephori*, §7, 122.12–3, ἀσφαλῆ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἑαυτῇ καταστήσασθαι.
[1323] See especially the version in Genesios, IV. §2; tr. Kaldellis, where Theodora initially rejects to agree to the change of religious policy stating that '[m]y husband the blessed Emperor was very wise and no matter of importance escaped his attention. How are we now to ignore his commands and turn a different mode of conduct?' In *The Acta*, §27, 245, and Th.Cont. IV. §4, Theodora threatens the clergy that she will not give her consent to the restoration of images unless Theophilos is given pardon.
[1324] Bury 1912, 148–9.
[1325] Gouillard 1967, 124–5, stressed the danger for the dynastic legitimacy of removing Theophilos' name from the diptychs (which manifested by the end of the ninth century). *ODB*, I, 637–8, s.v. 'Diptychs, Liturgical'.
[1326] Afinogenov 2004, esp. 63–77. Karlin–Hayter 2006b.
[1327] Markopoulos 1998.
[1328] Karlin–Hayter 1977, ead. 2001, ead. 2006b, and Afinogenov 2004, 63–77. For an opposite opinion, see Zielke 1999. In addition to the narratives clearing Theophilos' name, the evidence suggests that whitewashing included Theophilos' whole family and even the *magistros* Thoktistos, the first man of the empire. Thus, Theodora is said to have worshipped icons in secret during Theophilos' reign Th.Cont. III. §§5–6, IV§2; Logothete A, ch. 131, 232.2–4; *De Theophili Absolutione*, 94; *Life of Theodora*, §§5–6, 262–3. The same is said of her mother, Theoktista, who was also portrayed as secretly instructing her granddaughters to do the same, Th.Cont. III §5. Theoktista, PmbZ #8025. In the *Acta*, §29, 246–7, the toddler Michael is depicted as being the mouthpiece of God in revealing Iconoclast Patriarch John Grammatikos' wickedness, and a similar message is stressed more directly in the *Life of Theodora*, §10, 265–6. Finally, in one version of the story of Theophilos' penitence, the *magistros* Theoktistos is portrayed as carrying a pendant with an icon around his neck, which the emperor kisses, *Life of Theodora*, §8, 264–5.
[1329] *De Theophili absolutione*, 96, 98. *Life of Theodora*, §8, 264–5.

absolution to an unrepentant sinner who had already passed away, as preserved in several accounts of negotiations between Theodora and the church.[1330] According to the version in *Theophanes Continuatus*, when the empress asked for her husband's forgiveness

> the Orthodox Church and its leader Methodios said,[1331] 'Because what you request is just, O empress, we shall not reject it; […] But we cannot now, imagining ourselves greater than we are, like God, absolve one who has passed into the other life. … Sometimes this is possible also for those who are passing away, when their errors are small and they had regret for them; but for those who have already departed … we cannot release them from being called to account'.[1332]

Finally persuaded by Theodora's story of Theophilos' penitence before his death, Methodios agrees to attempt the absolution.

Leaving aside the question of the historicity of these negotiations as described in different accounts, Patriarch Methodios must have been aware and cautious about the canonical issues involved,[1333] and Afinogenov and Karlin-Hayter further argue that the absolution by the official church needed to be made believable for the sake of Methodios' integrity.[1334] The story of how the absolution was achieved is preserved in *De Theophili absolutione*. It is said that the prayers for Theophilos went on for seven days; then the patriarch Methodios took a new scroll (τόμον καινόν), and wrote the names of all the heretics that had come before Theophilos, adding the emperor's name at the end. Sealing the scroll in a most secure manner (καὶ οὕτω σφραγίσας μετὰ πάσης ἀσφαλείας), he placed it on the altar of Hagia Sophia and left. That night, an angel came to the patriarch Methodios in a dream, informing him that the emperor had been pardoned. The patriarch woke up and rushed to the altar to check the scroll, and Theophilos' name was gone from the list. The rumour of the extraordinary miracle spread throughout the city and all who heard it rejoiced (τούτου τοίνυν τοῦ παραδόξου καὶ θαύματος διαφημισθέντος ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ πόλει, πάντες οἱ ἀκούσαντες εὐφράνθησαν καὶ ἠγαλλιάσαντο).[1335] This last statement may be considered in support of arguments that

[1330] *The Acta*, §§27–8, 244–6. Th.Cont. IV §5. *De Theophili absolutione*, 104.
[1331] Note that the reply is presented as if an official response from the church.
[1332] Th. Cont. IV §5; tr. Featherstone and Signes Codoñer, 219. See a similar response from Methodios in *De Theophili absolutione*, 104. In the *Acta*, §§27–8, 244–6, Theodora is represented to be already aware of the issue and begins her plea by trying to persuade the assembly of Theophilos' death bed penitence. Note, however, a curious detail ibid., §27, 244, tr. Domingo-Forasté 1998, 213, before Theodora's address: 'When the emperor was on his deathbed, he had repented, *if not entirely*… [my italics I.M.]'.
[1333] That Methodios was well-aware and careful about the potential issues deriving from any uncanonical action, see the discussion with references in Karlin-Hayter 2006a, 65–74.
[1334] Afinogenov 2004, 74–7. Karlin-Hayter 2006b. For the narratives portraying opposition to Theophilos' absolution during negotiations, see the *Acta*, §§27–8, 244–6. Th.Cont. IV §4. Genesios, IV. §2, treated more fully below.
[1335] *De Theophili absolutione*, 108.343–63.

the absolution was advertised at the time,[1336] and Afinogenov identified an additional independent testimony that the story of the parchment as proof of absolution was known. In the praise of Theophanes the Confessor by Sabbas, preserved only in Old Church Slavonic, it is stated that 'a believer could hope that if he asks for forgiveness of sins, the One who had earlier erased a sealed parchment at night, will clearly hear him too'.[1337] Whether we can infer from it, with Afinogenov, that Theophilos' absolution had indeed been performed exactly as described is a slightly more difficult question. Afinogenov argued that Methodios had to create a believable narrative for the Constantinopolitan populace, as otherwise the whole business could easily have been perceived as a farce, undermining the intended goal and Methodios' integrity.[1338] I believe this is a sensible proposal, although we inevitably run into the perhaps unanswerable question of the elusive public opinion in mid-ninth century Constantinople, and what would be considered as more of a farce, Emperor Theophilos being celebrated among the orthodox rulers, or the story described above. Nevertheless, I agree with the interpretations advanced by both Afinogenov and Karlin-Hayter that Theophilos' absolution was advertised at the time, and possibly even performed in some form.[1339] Moreover, we have additional early evidence of another strategy for clearing Theophilos' name – laying the blame squarely on Patriarch John Grammatikos. We see this approach already in the *Narratio Nicephori*, which handles the sensitive subject of Emperor Theophilos very carefully. The emperor is referred to only once by name and in neutral terms,[1340] but the patriarch John is described as the head and tail of evil, 'dominating those in power', leading and dragging them – the unnamed (!) emperors – into the abyss of error.[1341] A more elaborate version of the same approach is preserved in *De Theophili absolutione*, where Patriarch John, as the emperor's teacher, is portrayed as corrupting Theophilos into becoming the tool of the devil.[1342]

Even though Theophilos' absolution was accepted by the official church, opposition persisted in monastic circles, which continued to heap insults at Theophilos and outrightly rejected the absolution. That opposition existed is undeniably confirmed, in my opinion, in *De Theophili absolutione*, where the author concludes that 'no one should

[1336] Afinogenov 2004, 75–7. Karlin-Hayter 2006b, 66.
[1337] Text after Afinogenov 2004, 76–7, n. 37, 'вѣрныи же да оупѡваетъ. ѩкѡ аще о сѡгрѣшенїихъ прощенїа прѡсите. тѡ прежде погладивъ и запечѧтлѣнноу хартїю нѡщїю. ѩкѡ ѧвѣ и того оуслышитъ'.
[1338] Afinogenov 2004, 75.
[1339] Perhaps embedded in the procession of the feast of orthodoxy in its earliest stages during Methodios' patriarchate (843–7), as proposed by Afinogenov 1999, and id. 2004, 65–73.
[1340] *Narratio Nicephori*, §7, 122.6–8, 'when the imperial power passed from Theophilos, who had finished his life, to his wife Theodora together with their son Michael …'
[1341] *Narratio Nicephori*, §8, 123.17–21.
[1342] *De Theophilis absolutione*, 90.21–4. Identical passage in the *Life of Theodora*, §5, 261.16–9.

doubt or oppose the absolution that Theophilos received from God'.[1343] Several accounts of the opposition (of questionable historicity) are preserved. In the *Acta*, Symeon initially angrily rejects Theodora's plea:

> His money perish with him! For he has neither part nor lot with the pious and orthodox, since he was a desecrater of the holy and fought against God. The divine was hateful to him while he was alive, and it is clear that this is also [true] now that he has departed'.[1344]

Two episodes are mentioned in *Theophanes Continuatus*. The first involves the painter Lazaros, whose hands are said to have been burned with hot irons at Theophilos' orders.[1345] In the second, the Graptoi brothers attend a banquet in the imperial palace following commemoration of the Sunday of Orthodoxy. The empress found it hard to take her eyes of their inscribed faces, so they asked the empress why is she gazing at them? The empress said: 'by your endurance of the lettering and cruelty of him who did this to you', to which Theophanes replied 'on account of this inscription I shall dispute all the more clearly with your husband the emperor, very harshly, before the impartial court of God'.[1346]

The *Life of Michael the Synkellos* contains one of the harshest treatments of Emperor Theophilos, and the most direct rejection of the emperor's pardon. The proposed dating is Emperor Michael III's sole reign, although this must remain tentative.[1347] Just like the approach established for previous Iconoclast rulers, Theophilos is introduced as a villain, compared to beasts in his ways,[1348] and denounced as a tyrant and heretic throughout the text.[1349] The narrative becomes particularly vigorous after describing in much detail the treatment of the Graptoi brothers. Besides the genuine connection between the brothers and Michael the Synkellos,[1350] the Graptoi were the best-known, living, example of Theophilos' tyranny, which is probably why the author comes up with

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[1343] *De Theophilis absolutione*, 110.393–6.
[1344] *The Acta*, §27, 245; tr. Domingo-Forasté, 215. Symeon agrees to recognize the absolution only after being implored to do so by every significant figure involved, including Emperor Theophilos himself in a dream, *The Acta*, §28, 245–6.
[1345] Th.Cont. III §13.
[1346] Th.Cont. IV§11; tr. Featherstone and Signes Codoñer, 229, 231.
[1347] Cunnigham 1991, 4–7, proposed that the dating to the first generation after the saints' death is likely, although impossible to prove; she points out that Michael III is addressed as still alive, and draws attention to the testimony of the hagiographer, *Life of Michael The Synkellos*, §39, 128, tr. Cunningham, 129, that the *Life* has been composed collecting the data from 'the saints' kinsman, acquaintances, eating and living companions, and disciples and in addition to these from those associates of the tyrant who are still alive'.
[1348] *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, §16, 72.20–2; tr. Cunningham, 73, '[h]e [Theophilos] was savage in ways and harsh in mind, breathing forth Christ-hating anger and fury. He was far more wicked than those who ruled before him…'
[1349] Theophilos is described as, *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, §17, 76.3–4, 8–9; tr. Cunningham, 77, 'the unmerciful tyrant' and 'Christ-hating tyrant'. See further Ibid., §24, 96.12–13; §31, 114.18; §38, 118.12.
[1350] Cunnigham 1991, 1–17. Sode 2001. Michael, PmbZ #5059. Theodore, PmbZ #7526. Theophanes, PmbZ #8093.

the harshest section against Theophilos immediately after the Graptoi were inscribed with verses as punishment.[1351] It begins with apologies made for the two brothers, effectively refuting the political accusations, not the religious ones, and then addresses Theophilos and the audience with an emphatically edifying message, denouncing the emperor's absolution in fairly direct terms:

> [a]nd why should you not be worthy of derision, you who are unworthy of the purple? In commanding that their faces be inscribed you did nothing which was alien to your madness and your lawless mind, and you involuntarily revealed them to be martyrs of Christ, treasuring up for yourself everlasting punishment to which you will be condemned by Christ our God Whose icon made after the flesh you denied along with your father Satan. … because you were eager to persecute them, God Who judges righteously through His righteous wrath will hinder you from such an aim [i.e. entrance to paradise] And … destructive death and eternal punishment will receive you after a short time.[1352]

It is difficult to see in these lines anything but a denial of Theophilos' absolution, delivered as a response to the punishment of his best-known victims. Theophilos is contrasted with his victims, the pure saints, and denied a place anywhere near them, that is among the orthodox. The motif is repeated later, relating the Graptoi's passing: 'After they had thus struggled, […] and put to shame the tyrants and godless heretics, they attained that choir for which they longed, and like the best shepherds they are now interceding outspokenly (ἐν παρρησίᾳ) on behalf of their orthodox and holy flock.'[1353] Emperor Theophilos' not escaping God's justice is the central theme in all the narratives rejecting the pardon, regardless of the agents.[1354]

Theophilos is also directly being proclaimed as unworthy of the purple, and the exact same phrase is used later for Emperor Constantine V, already named Kopronymos.[1355] This also points to Michael III's potentially delegitimizing legacy. It is difficult to imagine that such scathing criticism of Theophilos could have been circulated under his son, but it seems to have been composed in this period, and it may in fact reflect a broader phenomenon at the time, as suggested by the other surviving episodes of rejecting Theophilos' absolution.

Finally, Photios may have inserted a veiled reference to Theophilos' Iconoclasm in an encomium addressing Emperor Michael directly. In his homily 18, delivered during the council of 867, Photios opens with praise for Michael:

[1351] The whole section is long, *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, §20, 86.18, 88.25.
[1352] Ibid., §20, 88.6–25; tr. Cunningham, 89.
[1353] Ibid., §31, 114.17–21; tr. Cunningham, 115.
[1354] *The Acta*, §27, 245. Th.Cont. III §13; IV§ 11.
[1355] *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, §28, 108.11–12.

> thanks to one man [i.e. Michael III], the champion of pious, new and noble deeds, he is glorified with the birth-pangs of youth, and puts off old age with its reproaches, as if he had succeeded in showing everyone in the light of truth a well-born and excellent offspring blooming with the grace of all good things.[1356]

These lines may be nothing more than a rhetorical flourish, but the praise of Michael succeeding in demonstrating to be an excellent offspring sounds to me as if Photios was saying that Michael proved himself to be orthodox against the odds, i.e. despite Theophilos' Iconoclasm, thus very tacitly reminding the emperor of his father's past. We should bear in mind that if Photios wished to deliver some such message, it had to be veiled.

Disinterment of Constantine V

Several (later) sources report that the remains of Emperor Constantine V were exhumed from his tomb in the mausoleum of Justinian I at the church of the Holy Apostles and burnt at the Amastrianon square, and that his sarcophagus was broken up and used for restoring the palatine church of the Theotokos at the Pharos. The most detailed surviving account suggests that this act was turned into a public spectacle that involved a mock-trial of Constantine's remains in the Hippodrome, and included the remains of the last iconoclast patriarch, John Grammatikos, alongside those of the emperor. Despite the rather unprecedented nature of this episode, it has received little focused attention in scholarship. Lombard mentioned it only in a footnote;[1357] Mango commented on it in passing discussing the rebuilding of the Pharos church under Emperor Michael III;[1358] Gero briefly commented upon it on two occasions.[1359] Lemerle was the only historian who dismissed the historicity of the act as 'imagination of iconodule monks', although, to be fair, his focus was on Patriarch John, which may well only be propaganda.[1360] Grierson devoted more attention to this case in the context of his study of imperial tombs and obituaries;[1361] Karlin-Hayter touched upon it briefly in two studies;[1362] in accordance with the nature of her monograph, Rochow only brought together an (incomplete) list of sources and selection of literature,[1363] and recently Varona Codeso did the same in the context of another incident occurring at Constantine V's tomb.[1364] Considering the lack

[1356] Photios, *Homilies*, §18, 173.7–11; tr. Mango, 306.
[1357] Lombard 1902, 57, n. 5.
[1358] Mango 1958, 181.
[1359] Gero 1974/5, 28–9, and id. 1977, 164–5, n. 58.
[1360] Lemerle 1986, 165–6, n. 151. See below about the inclusion of John Grammatikos.
[1361] Grierson 1962, 33–4, 53–4.
[1362] Karlin-Hayter 1991a, 116, and 1991b, 380–3.
[1363] Rochow 1994, 138–9.
[1364] Varona Codeso 2008, 156–7.

of a more focused attention and the fact that no scholar so far took into account the earliest extant text transmitting the story – Peter of Alexandria's chronicle –, a more detailed treatment of the case is in order.

The world chronicle by Peter of Alexandria is dated to the first half of the tenth century on manuscript evidence.[1365] As other works of the same genre, it provides little more than a list of rulers,[1366] which makes it even more interesting that Peter decided to include as the concluding line in the entry on Emperor Constantine V that 'after 78 years, the orthodox emperor Michael, son of Theophilos, burnt his [Constantine V's] body at the [A]Mastrianou square in the city'.[1367] There are several issues with Peter's account, unfortunately. First, he provides us with the most 'precise' yet inherently contradictory date. Seventy-eight years after Constantine V's death (14 September 775) places the destruction of his body in 853/4, which is still during the time of Theodora's regency and two or three years away from Michael's sole reign, a distinction that Peter was careful to make in later chapters.[1368] Moreover, Peter's dates in this section are not always correct, although he strives for precision.[1369] Finally, Peter displays a marked pro-Amorian, or anti-Macedonian, tenor. Michael III is emphatically called the orthodox ruler in this incident; the fact that he crowned Basil is repeated twice in the space of three lines, and Peter includes the note of the assassination: 'Michael crowned Basil, and was slain by the same Basil in the palace'.[1370] Nevertheless, Peter's testimony agrees in its basic information with all the sources that transmit the story; namely that Constantine V's remains were burnt (at the Amastrianon square) during Emperor Michael III's reign (broadly taken to include the period of his nominal rule, 842–67).

The most detailed account of the incident is preserved in the Logothete tradition, which places the episode after the assassination of the *kaisar* Bardas (21 April 866), Michael's uncle.[1371] The Logothete shares Peter's anti-Macedonian tenor, and offers interesting and unique details concerning the remains and the regalia involved. It is said that the body of the last iconoclast patriarch, John Grammatikos, was taken as well, and that

[1365] Peter of Alexandria, 180–97. The only surviving manuscript is dated to the first half of the tenth century, and the chronicle ends with Emperors Leo VI (r. 886–912) and Alexander (r. 912–13), Samodurova 1961, 154–5.
[1366] The chronicle starts with Adam and includes diverse topical sections before concluding with the list of Roman Emperors in Constantinople, Peter of Alexandria, 195–7. See more details in the introduction by Samodurova 1961, 150–80.
[1367] Peter of Alexandria, 197.9–11, Τούτου τὸ σῶμα [Constantine V] ἔκαυσε Μιχαὴλ ὁ ὀρθόδοξος βασιλεὺς υἱὸς Θεοφίλου μετὰ ἔτη οζ' εἰς τὰ Μαστριανοῦ ἐν τῇ πόλει. 'Mastrianou' is clearly to be corrected to Amastrianou, as all the other sources maintain, which is a known neighbourhood.
[1368] Peter of Alexandria, 197.29–30, 'Theodora with her son Michael and her daughters'; Ibid., 197.31, 'Michael alone'.
[1369] E.g., ibid., 197.4, the length of reign of Emperor Leo III is set at twenty-five years, where it should be twenty-four, or ibid., 197.29–30, that of Theodora's regency set at twelve, where it should be either thirteen or fourteen, depending on the counting.
[1370] Peter of Alexandria, 197.31–4.
[1371] Logothete A, ch. 131, 255.418–27. The Ps.-Symeon, 681.4–12, copies almost verbatim the version from the Logothete.

both were subjected to a public mock-trial and punishment at the Hippodrome before being burnt at the Amastrianon square; finally, it adds that Constantine V's tomb was cut into slabs and used for the renovation of the Pharos church (864). This same detail is given even more emphasis in chapter II, 42 of *De Cerimoniis*, [1372] which offers a list of the tombs and obituaries of members of the imperial family inside Constantinople (the so-called *Catalogus sepulchrorum*) composed in the tenth century under Emperor Constantine VII.[1373] The destruction of Constantine V's remains is here ascribed to Michael and Theodora, presumably placing it during her regency between 843 and 856.[1374] Additionally, two shorter lists with slight variations expanded until the eleventh-century are preserved separately.[1375] Concerning the agency, one is identical with *De Cer.* (Michael and Theodora),[1376] while the other does not mention who was behind the event.[1377] The account preserved in the eleventh-century chronicle by Kedrenos places the story, like Peter of Alexandria, at the end of the chapter on Constantine V, adding that Michael acted under the influence of his uncle Bardas.[1378] This would date the incident to between 864 and 866. Finally, the thirteenth-century compilation of various materials on the early history of Venice includes the so-called *Necrologium imperatorum* – a Latin translation of the Greek version of the list similar to the one from *De Cerimoniis* – in which the agency for disinterment is ascribed to Empress Theodora acting on Patriarch Methodios' advice, with no mention of Michael, thus dating the incident to 843–7, and adds the detail that Constantine's ashes were thrown into the sea.[1379]

These frustratingly contradictory statements in the sources imply different datings and agents, and scholarly opinion on this issue is divided. The proposed terminus ante quem is tied to the renovation of the Pharos church, convincingly dated to 864 by Jenkins and Mango.[1380] However, the *damnatio memoriae* could also have been staged at a later date, and any old corpse could have been proclaimed to belong to Constantine V. Grierson further argued for setting the terminus post quem in 861, following reports in several texts that Michael's uncle Bardas had the deposed patriarch Ignatios tortured at

[1372] De Cer. II, ch. 42, 642–9.
[1373] Bury 1907, 217–19, 223–5. Downey 1959. Grierson 1962, 7–10.
[1374] De Cer. II, ch. 42, 645.1–9, ἕτερος λάρναξ ἀπὸ λίθου πρασίνου Θετταλικοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἀπέκειτο Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Ἰσαύρου ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Καβαλλίνος, ἀλλ' ἐξεώθη ὑπὸ Μιχαὴλ καὶ Θεοδώρας, καὶ κατεκάη τὸ δύστηνον αὐτοῦ σῶμα. ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ λάρναξ αὐτοῦ ἐξεώθη καὶ κατεπρήσθη, καὶ ἐχρημάτισεν εἰς τὰ τοῦ Φάρου συστεμάτια. καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μεγάλα ἀββάκια τὰ ὄντα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ Φάρῳ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ λάρνακος τυγχάνοντά εἰσιν.
[1375] Downey 1959, 37–42.
[1376] The anonymous list 'R', Downey 1959, 41.
[1377] The anonymous list 'C', Downey 1959, 38.
[1378] Kedrenos, 771.38–40, τὸ δὲ σῶμα αὐτοῦ τεθὲν ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων, ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Μιχαήλ, υἱοῦ Θεοφίλου, βουλῇ καὶ παραινέσει Βάρδα τοῦ Καίσαρος ἀπαχθὲν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ τοῦ Ἀμαστριανοῦ ἐκαύθη.
[1379] *Chronicon Altinate*, ed. Cessi 1933, 109.13–21; tr. Grierson 1962, 53. See further on this source and the manuscript tradition of the *Necrologium* in Grierson 1962, 10–20.
[1380] Jenkins and Mango 1956. Followed by Grierson 1962, 54.

the tomb of Kopronymos.[1381] Against Grierson's proposal, Gero considered that the evidence from the lists of tombs in *De Cer.* undeniably confirms that the incident should be dated to Theodora's regency,[1382] followed by Karlin-Hayter, who also pointed out that the destruction of the body could have taken place years before the destruction of the sarcophagus, and further argued that the act fits the atmosphere during Methodios' patriarchate.[1383] I disagree on the last point – Karlin-Hayter herself realized this in her later studies[1384] – as with ascribing commanding authority to the list of tombs, as both Gero and Karlin-Hayter do. Yet to demonstrate my point necessitates a discussion of the nature and context of this source in more detail.

The crucial issue regarding the lists of tombs as a source is the relationship between chapter II, 42 of *De Cer.* and the two later lists. Specifically, the question is whether the later lists are derived from *De Cer.* or whether all three rely on a common (lost) source? That is to say, was the list compiled for the first time under Constantine VII, or did he or his ghostwriters merely include the redaction of an older text in *De Cer.*?[1385] Bury examined the style and composition and argued that the document was indeed an original work; he further proposed that chapter II, 42 was meant to be a standalone document and that it circulated in a different format, from which the two eleventh-century lists derive.[1386] Downey disagreed, arguing for an independent common source, based on the discrepancies between a few entries,[1387] while Grierson essentially agreed with Bury, but argued that the separate version would probably have been in the form of brief notes collected by Constantine's agents *in situ*, which would explain the discrepancies.[1388] The arguments advanced by Bury and Grierson seem to me more convincing. I cannot expand on the question of the precise relationship between these texts beyond what has already been said; yet a broader look at other sources suggests that there is no evidence that a list of tombs existed in any form before this compilation was made under Constantine. Records were probably derived from the records of the church of the Holy Apostles, possibly a calendar of imperial obituaries as well as anniversaries, as Grierson proposed.[1389] But the notices we find in earlier sources look nothing like the one in the

[1381] Grierson 1962, 53–4. *Life of Ignatios*, §35, 52.7–11; Genesios, IV, §18, 71.13–14; Th.Cont, IV, §31.3–6. Most recent treatment of this incident is Varona Codeso 2008, 156–7, 297–9.
[1382] Gero 1977, 164, n. 58.
[1383] Karlin-Hayter 1991a, 116, ead. 1991b, 380–3. More recently Varona Codeso 2008, 156–7, summarized the evidence and scholarly opinions without arguing for any one interpretation.
[1384] Karlin-Hayter 2006b.
[1385] Bury 1907, 224.
[1386] Ibid., 223–5.
[1387] Especially the confusion about the entry on Constans II, Downey 1959, 29, 36, 39–40.
[1388] Grierson 1962, 7–8.
[1389] Ibid., 16.

list of tombs: specifying the type and colour of the stone used for every sarcophagus is one of the markers of the *De Cer.* list.[1390]

The most important evidence here comes from the sources crucial for the disinterment case. Although Peter of Alexandria had at his disposal an exceptionally wide range of sources, especially of the 'list-kind',[1391] there is no evidence that he used a list of tombs like the one composed under Constantine VII. Likewise, the earliest version of the Logothete did equally not make use of any such list but, importantly, the later versions did.[1392] Crucially, *Theophanes Continuatus*, composed under Constantine VII, is the earliest chronicle that undeniably drew on the list, as identified by Featherstone and Signes Codoñer.[1393] Looking specifically at the case of disinterment, Peter has almost nothing in common with the entry in the *De Cer.* list except that the remains of Constantine were burnt. The Logothete does contain the notice that the green sarcophagus was cut in slabs and used for the renovation of the Pharos church, as also mentioned in the *De Cer.* list, but the wording is completely different.[1394] This probably indicates that the incident has become a well-known story in tenth-century Constantinople. In sum, we can conclude that the list of tombs, as preserved in chapter II, 42 of *De Cer.* did not exist in this format before Constantine VII; moreover, the composition of such a text would fit well with the efforts for historical research characteristic of this emperor's reign.[1395]

This conclusion is important to bear in mind for evaluating the quality of evidence preserved in the *De Cer.* list, because it means that it was based on information available in the mid-tenth century,[1396] and may contain an inherent bias, no less than that of Peter of Alexandria and the Logothete. There is evidence that contemporary political considerations very much influenced the process of composing or, rather, editing the text. Besides glorifying epithets accorded to Constantine VII's grandfather Basil I and father Leo VI,[1397] there is a notable silence about any of the Lekapenoi, even though the

[1390] Some examples of mentioning of burials and/or tombs in the Holy Apostles include: Constantine the Great's mother Helena, Theophanes, 27; Constantine the Great, Ibid., 33-4; Theodosios I, ibid., 74; Eudokia, Emperor Herakleios' wife, *Chronicon Paschale*, 702-3, etc.
[1391] Samodurova 1961, 157–69, explored the breadth of sources used by Peter, many of which are either lost or completely unknown, and she provides a useful list of passages at ibid., 169–79. Significantly, she points out that for the period between the seventh and ninth centuries, there is but two possible instances that find parallels with the known chroniclers, namely Patriarch Nikephoros, Ibid., 166–8. More generally, see Odorico 1990, and id. 2014.
[1392] The three manuscripts that include entries from the list of tombs are P, H, and K, belonging to the apographa manuscript family χ, Wahlgren 2006, *30–1 (ms. K = Constantinopolitanus 37), *36–7 (ms. P = Parisinus gr. 854), *40 (ms. H = Vaticanus gr. 1807); *54–*62 (family χ); *139 (Stemma codicum).
[1393] Th.Cont. II, §28.20–1=De Cer. II, ch. 42, 645.17–8. Featherstone and Signes Codoñer 2015, *17–18, n. 52, with stemma of the sources at *27–8.
[1394] De Cer. II, ch. 42, 645.1–9 ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ λάρναξ αὐτοῦ ἐξεώθη καὶ κατεπρήσθη, καὶ ἐχρημάτισεν εἰς τὰ τοῦ Φάρου συστεμάτια. καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μεγάλα ἀββάκια τὰ ὄντα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ Φάρῳ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ λάρνακος τυγχάνοντά εἰσιν. Logothete A, ch. 131, 255.425–7, τὴν δὲ λάρνακα τοῦ Κοπρωνύμου πράσινον οὖσαν καὶ θαυμαστὴν διαπρίσας ἐποίησε στηθέα ἐν τῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κτισθέντι ναῷ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ἐν τῷ Φάρῳ.
[1395] See most recently Németh 2018.
[1396] As Grierson 1962, 8–9, argued.
[1397] De Cer. II, ch. 42, 643.4–17.

compilers covered much more obscure figures.[1398] Moreover, although the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* had access to the list, as mentioned, he deliberately decided not to include the disinterment of Constantine V in the narrative, be it under Theodora's regency or Michael's sole reign, and this raises some suspicion. As outlined, both Peter of Alexandria and the Logothete show a strong anti-Macedonian bias and include the incident in their texts; in fact, Peter included it in his short entry specifically to demonstrate Emperor Michael's orthodoxy. How to explain this silence? As mentioned, the broad evidence suggests that the story, or stories, of the incident were circulating in tenth-century Constantinople. Moreover, it was an incident that portrayed Emperor Michael in a positive light, and we have additional evidence that very soon after Constantine VII's death, the notoriety of Constantine V was still such that it could be employed for political manipulation.[1399] Since it was difficult to put a negative spin on the destruction of the remains of the arch-Iconoclast, it seems that the best approach was to leave it out. Finally, the anti-Macedonian narrative that was preserved through texts like the Logothete, is precisely the sort of historical memory Constantine VII worked against by commissioning *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Vita Basilii*.[1400] Although this analysis does not solve the problems present in our sources, I hope it demonstrates that the information preserved in the list of tombs should not be taken at face value, nor accorded the value of an official record.

The Logothete chronicle is the most detailed and most interesting surviving text on the disinterment. It runs as follows:

> The Emperor Michael, sending an engineer called Labaris, removed [the body of] Constantine Kaballinos from the tomb, whom [i.e. the body] he found sound, and he wished to dress the corpse in a *sakkos,* but when it did not fit, he [just] wrapped it. Likewise, he also removed patriarch Iannes from the tomb together with his omophorion. By the order of the emperor, the *hyparchos* enclosed them in the Praetorium; on the day of the races, he led them out and stripping them naked, lashed them with a whip, and he sent away and burnt their bones in the Amastrianon square. Having cut Kopronymos' marvellous green sarcophagus into pieces, he made the slabs for the Pharos church in the palace, [which was] founded by him.[1401]

[1398] As Grierson 1962, 28–9, already noted. See De Cer. II, ch. 42, 646–9. Romanos I Lekapenos usurped the throne while Constantine VII was still under–aged, and tried to impose his own dynasty, Shepard 2008, 505–11. Marić 2018. PmbZ #26833.

[1399] Under Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–9), a canon was proclaimed invalid because, according to Skylitzes, § 14.2, tr. Wortley 2010, 251, n. 9, it was 'a law of Kopronymos […] and it need not be observed'.

[1400] Magdalino 2013.

[1401] Logothete A, ch. 131, 255.418–27, Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Μιχαὴλ ἀποστείλας μηχανικόν τὸν λεγόμενον Λάβαριν ἐξάγει Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Καβαλλῖνον ἐκ τοῦ τάφου, ὃν εὗρεν ὑγιῆ, καὶ θέλων εἰσαγαγεῖν ἐν σάκκῳ καὶ μὴ χωρούμενον ἐνετύλιξεν αὐτόν. ὡσαύτως καὶ Ἰαννῆν πατριάρχην ἐξήγαγεν ἐκ τοῦ τάφου ἅμα τῷ ὠμοφορίῳ αὐτοῦ· καὶ τούτους προστάξει τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπέκλεισεν ὁ ὕπαρχος ἐν τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἱππικοῦ ἀγαγὼν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀπογυμνώσας ἔτυψε μαγλάβια, καὶ τὰ ὀστᾶ αὐτῶν ἀποστείλας κατέκαυσεν ἐν τοῖς Ἀμαστριανοῦ. τὴν δὲ λάρνακα τοῦ Κοπρωνύμου πράσινον οὖσαν καὶ θαυμαστὴν διαπρίσας ἐποίησε στηθέα ἐν τῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κτισθέντι ναῷ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ἐν τῷ Φάρῳ.

This testimony agrees with other ones in placing the burning of the remains at the Amastrianon (Peter, Kedrenos, *Necrologium*) and in the spoliation of the sarcophagus for the renovation of the Pharos church (*Catalogus sepulchrorum*, although the wording is completely different), but everything else is unique to the Logothete. The statement that the body was found healthy is a curious detail,[1402] and it may be deriving from a popular legend. Overall, the impression is that the account could be based on oral memory. I will return later to the more problematic aspects of this account (including the mention of Patriarch John), and proceed for now with the analysis of the spectacle, as described in Logothete.

The described treatment of the remains seems rather extraordinary for a corpse, especially a c. eighty-year old one,[1403] but it follows very closely the procedure for the punishment visited on living criminals, including the imprisonment in the Praetorium before the execution, the stripping naked and lashing in the Hippodrome, and the burning at the Amastrianon. As explored, under the Iconoclasts, especially under Constantine V himself, the Hippodrome had been the major venue for public humiliations and carrying out acts of justice, especially against high-profile offenders, and it remained so in the ninth century. Furthermore, we have evidence that the Amastrianon square was used for the burning of criminals in this period.[1404] Interestingly, the square was not far from the Forum Bovis which served as the location for burnings until the late seventh century at least,[1405] and Tirnanić argued that the memory of this particular punishment may have been associated with that broader area.[1406] The attention given to the vestment is in line with the paramount importance of costumes in Byzantine ceremonial and culture more broadly, carefully observed also in parodies and humiliation processions.[1407] Moreover, moving, or manipulating, bodies of important figures for political purposes was not uncommon. As one of his first acts after becoming emperor in 886, Leo VI transferred the

[1402] Curiously, Ps.-Symeon, 681.4–12, who copies Logothete almost verbatim, leaves out that the body was found healthy.
[1403] If the body was indeed that of Constantine V, one may wonder how was the skeleton arranged to withstand the lashing? Perhaps this is why an *engineer* was necessary for the task. Alternatively, it may suggest that he also had the sarcophagus cut into slabs, although Osterhout 1999, 43–4, concludes that the term *mehanikos* in architecture and construction-related texts represents an archaism in this period.
[1404] Basil I burnt the slaves who had rebelled against their master, Logothete A, §132, 2.14–8, while Romanos I Lekapenos had an imposter-usurper pretending to be Constantine Dukas burnt, ibid., §136, 65.507–16. Further on the location and description of the Amastrianon, Janin 1955, 85–91.
[1405] Following the deposition of Emperor Justinian II in 695, two of his officers, Stephen and Theodotus, were dragged down the *Mese* and burnt at the Forum Bovis, Nikephoros, §40. Theophanes, 369.
[1406] Tirnanic 2010, 48–76, explored more broadly the social memory of punitive spectacles engraved in the urban topography; she points out that the Forum Bovis continued to be used as the location for burning even after the great furnace had been supposedly destroyed, ibid., 68–9.
[1407] As already noted in the case of the humiliation of the former patriarch Constantine II, see ch. 2, sub-heading 'The major conspiracy agasint Constantine V (756/6)'. On the importance of costumes in ceremonial, see the recent studies by Parani 2013 a, and ead. 2013b, and ODB, I, 538-40, s.v. 'Costume'.

body of Michael III and interred it with honours in the church of the Holy Apostles.[1408] We have also the earlier examples of Empress Eirene,[1409] or of saints, like Theodore of Stoudios and Patriarch Nikephoros.[1410] The Logothete's description, therefore, agrees with long-established traditions of punishment and humiliation, as well as contemporary practices (i.e. the burning at the Amastrianon), and I would therefore argue in favour of its historicity.

The disinterment spectacle aimed for maximum publicity, and the authorities certainly made sure that the audience at the Hippodrome was already aware of the identity of the culprit (or culprits). Before the punishment was executed, there seems to have been a mock-trial, with an official, possibly the *eparchos* or one of his officers, reading the verdict, which could also have been communicated in some form prior to the event.[1411] As far as I am aware, such a mock-trial of a corpse would have been unique in Byzantine history up to this time, but the deceased pope Formosus was subjected to a quite similar treatment in the infamous 'Cadaver Synod' taking place in Rome in 897.[1412]

What was the accusation, or rather verdict, against Emperor Constantine? The obvious answer is of course that it was connected to this emperor's instituting the doctrine against icon-veneration, condemned as a heresy in the meantime, but before tackling this answer fully, it should be stressed that the overwhelming message communicated through this macabre spectacle was the condemnation of Constantine as a tyrant. The removal of the imperial regalia symbolized deposition, judging Constantine 'unworthy of the purple'.[1413] Moreover, 'Dig out his bones!' was a popular slogan employed against tyrants; the deposition of Justinian II in 695 began with the shout 'may Justinian's bones be dug up',[1414] and Justinian himself 'raised the shout' when taking back the throne in 705.[1415] The disinterment of Constantine V could in fact be assessed as a manifestation of this slogan.[1416] Furthermore, the public execution and humiliation of a body was not unusual per se, but such treatment of emperors was reserved for tyrants, such as

[1408] Logothete A, §133, 2.4–10. Th.Cont. VI, 353.4–11.
[1409] On Empress Eirene's burial and posthumous movement, Theophanes, 478–80. See the proposal by Grierson 1962, 34, that Eirene may have been interred in the Holy Apostles in the empty space left after the destruction of Constantine V's tomb.
[1410] See below, n. 1429.
[1411] The discussed treatment of the nineteen officials plotting against Constantine V, or the punishment of Leo V's murderers in the Hippodrome come to mind as comparative cases.
[1412] Removed from his tomb, Formosus was dressed up in the papal regalia, and tried in a fake process which even granted him a lawyer. Found guilty, the pope was ceremonially deposed; the three fingers of his right hand were cut off, invalidating his acts, and his body was first dumped in the cemetery for pilgrims, but the authorities allowed the mob (or organized it) to throw the body into the Tiber. Moore 2012. Elliott 2017, 1028–38. There is no evidence of the influence of the Constantinopolitan case on Rome, but the interaction between the two sees was particularly intense during Emperor Michael III's reign and in the ninth century more broadly, and the two did share broader cultural tenets.
[1413] *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, §28, tr. Cunningham, 109.
[1414] Theophanes, 369; tr. Mango and Scott, 515.
[1415] Theophanes, 374; tr. Mango and Scott, 522.
[1416] Suggesting also that it did not lose its meaning entirely as Alexander 1958, 125, assumed.

Phokas, who was mutilated, his body parts paraded on poles and the rest of the body dragged down the Mese and burnt at the Forum Bovis, not far from the Amastrianon.[1417] 'Peacefully' deposed rulers usually retired to a monastery with their families.[1418] With this in mind, the 'verdict' against Constantine V may have also included unlawful execution of illustrious men,[1419] or of ecclesiastical figures accorded saintly status in the meantime (e.g. St Stephen the Younger), constituting an element of retribution, as accentuated in the *Necrologium*.[1420]

But, to come back to the obvious answer, condemning Constantine as a tyrant above all invalidated his acts.[1421] His disinterment then performatively expressed the turn polemics against Constantine had taken which, as we have seen, moved from refutations of his theological arguments to denouncing the emperor through ad hominem condemnation. The most important act of Constantine V for post-843 church politics was the council of Hiereia – the council that had institutionalized the Iconoclast doctrine in 754, and was reconfirmed in 815; the very council that Iconophile authors tried so hard to invalidate, as explored in this chapter. Moreover, the ritual burning of Constantine's earthly remains and throwing the ashes into the sea can be compared with the burning of Constantine V's theological texts in the aftermath of the council of Nikaia II (787).[1422] There may also have been an eschatological dimension involved, since the ritual destruction and condemnation of Constantine V's mortal remains would have prevented the possibility of salvation. The act can thus be considered as an ultimate excommunication,[1423] a separation from the community of Christians, which had been a steady characteristic of anti-Iconoclast/anti-Constantine polemic for decades.

The condemnation of the arch-Iconoclast was certainly a great victory for the official church, but for this spectacle to be enacted, motivations must also have been strong on the part of the ruling dynasty. One major incentive for the Amorians behind this action, be it under Theodora's regency or Michael III's sole reign, must have been to further clear Theophilos' name. As argued, the insults against Theophilos and outright rejection of his pardon continued well into Michael's reign, with a delegitimizing potential, especially in an atmosphere charged with anti-Iconoclast polemic. By laying the blame for Iconoclasm wholly on Constantine V, attention was diverted from Theophilos. The mock-

[1417] *Chronicon Paschale*, 700–1; tr. Whitby and Whitby 2007, 151–2, n. 424, with further references. Nikephoros, §1, 36. Theophanes, 299.
[1418] Notable examples include Theodosios III, PmbZ #7793, Michael I, PmbZ #4989, or Romanos I Lekapenos, PmbZ #26833.
[1419] Like the *patrikios* Baktangios or the brothers Constantine and Stephen.
[1420] *Chronicon Altinate*, 109.19–21; tr. Grierson 1962, 53.
[1421] Comparison with the 'Cadaver Synod' is noteworthy in this regard.
[1422] *ACO*, 596.19–23. On ritual book burning, see Herrin 2013.
[1423] Even if we have no evidence that anathema has been pronounced.

trial of Constantine's remains may have something to do with the overwhelming message by his detractors that Theophilos would not escape the righteous trial and judgement of God. In the *De Theophili absolutione*, Theodora receives a nocturnal dream vision of a group of people armed with torture instruments dragging Theophilos naked like a criminal, with his hands tied behind his back, towards a trial in front of Christ above the Chalke gate.[1424] In the dream, Christ grants his pardon to the emperor and orders the group to dress him up and send him to his wife;[1425] in the enactment of the trial in the Hippodrome, by contrast, Constantine V was condemned, and stripped of the imperial purple. The strategy of clearing Theophilos' name by laying the blame on others, especially the figure of Patriarch John Grammatikos, had already been attempted; accordingly, by pairing, as it were, Patriarch John, not with the emperor who was historically his contemporary, but with the long-gone Constantine, Theophilos would have been conveniently left out of this company, just like his name was miraculously erased from the list of heretical rulers. Although the inclusion of John is attested only in the Logothete, an indirect hint in support of this information can be found in Patriarch Photios' homily 15, plausibly dated to February 867.[1426] In the sermon, which is dedicated to the Arian heresy, Photios condemns John Grammatikos, comparing him with Arius, and more broadly Iconoclasm with Arianism.[1427] This detail may suggest that John was already dead, and that his remains had been condemned together with those of Constantine V.

With this I return to the curious note from the Logothete that Constantine V's body was found 'healthy'. Since the sixth century, an incorruptible body was a mark of sainthood,[1428] and a standard topos in relic translation narratives and hagiographical texts.[1429] It is true that there is a recorded early modern belief among the Greek Orthodox – presumed to be very old – that the incorruptibility of body occurred not only with the saints, but also with the wicked, but this presumed that the body has been under the anathema.[1430] Moreover, Krausmüller recently examined the mid-ninth century attitude towards the posthumous activity of the soul, and all evidence for incorruptible bodies that he came across pertains to saints.[1431]

[1424] *De Theophili absolutione*, 106.313, 108.341.
[1425] Ibid., 108.334–9.
[1426] Mango 1958, 20–4.
[1427] Photios, *Homilies*, §15, 139.1–141.6.
[1428] Krausmüller 2015, 152–3, n. 38.
[1429] The two most prominent contemporary cases include the Patriarch Nikephoros, *Narratio Nicephori*, §12, 126.19–21, analysed above, and Theodore of Stoudios, *Translatio Theodori*, §9, 56.4–5. See Krausmüller 2015, for three additional examples, Euthymios of Sardis, Eudokimos of Charsianon and Philotheos of Opsikion, all contemporary with Methodios' lifetime.
[1430] *RAC*, 7, col. 1249–50, s.v. 'Fluch'.
[1431] Krausmüller 2015.

This leads me to believe that the detail in the Logothete probably reflects a popular legend that began circulating not long after the disinterment, suggesting in turn that Constantine V's saintly cult may still have been strong in the capital. As Lombard and others have noted, the destruction of Constantine's tomb – which was an unusual, symbolic act[1432] – was probably aimed at suppressing the veneration of his memory.[1433] Apart from the incident of the retired soldiers praying at the tomb in 813, Constantine may have been commemorated annually on 14 September, probably until 842, and the tomb would have been the centre of an emerging cult, and evolved into a sort of pilgrimage site.[1434] The combined evidence raises the question of whether Constantine might possibly even have been venerated as a saint among the populace of Constantinople?[1435] For the Byzantine church, personal imperial sainthood was a taboo,[1436] but the (near-)contemporary case of Emperor Theodosios III suggests that former emperors could be associated with features characteristic of saints. Concluding the chapter on Theodosios, Kedrenos relates that miracles were performed at Theodosios' tomb which was inscribed with the word 'health' (ὑγεία),[1437] and the testimony of miracles is also preserved in the *Necrologion*.[1438] As discussed above, Constantine's slaying of a dragon had brought him into the sphere of sainthood, and during the incident at his tomb, the soldiers addressed supplication prayers to the deceased emperor and spread the rumour that he had risen, which would have been appropriate for a saint. It is difficult to make a proposition that Emperor Constantine V was venerated as saint, but it is also a fascinating prospect, which would account to an extent for the extreme nature of the punishment of his remains, and balance out the polemic that proclaimed him the Antichrist.

Lastly, I come back to the problematic question of dating. In view of the outlined lack of evidence for any public condemnation of the Iconoclast emperors in the early years after Theophilos' death, and the proposed conclusions that the cult and popularity of the emperor Constantine V was still strong in the capital, the disinterment, which was real-

[1432] Grierson's study has shown that imperial *sarcophagoi* were precious objects; family members were often buried together and the tombs were reused, and sometimes deliberately emptied. See the example of Leo VI, who had Justin I and his wife Euphemia removed to re-use their sarcophagus for the burial of Michael III, Grierson 1962, 45–6.
[1433] Lombard, 1902, 57, n. 5. Gero 1974/5, 28–9. Varona Codeso 2008, 157.
[1434] Gero 1974/5, 29.
[1435] It is worth noting that the veneration of Emperor John III Vatatzes (r. 1222–54) as saint came 'from below', Ciolfi 2015/6, 32–4.
[1436] Dagron 2003, 143–57, has shown that the church kept the example of sanctification of Emperor Constantine the Great as an exception. See the similar conclusions in Ciolfi 2015/6. The futile attempt of Emperor Basil I to have his prematurely deceased son Constantine sanctified is the case in point, Dagron 2003, 202–3.
[1437] Kedrenos, 745.13–4, γράφει δὲ ἐν τάφῳ αὐτοῦ· «Ὑγεία». λέγουσι δε τινες τῶν ἐντοπίων θαυματουργεῖν αὐτόν.
[1438] *Chronicon Altinate*, 109.4–8. Grierson 1962, 52–3.

ized as a public spectacle, could not have taken place as early as Methodios' patriarchate, and should generally be dated farther from rather than closer to 843. While an argument could be made for the later period of Theodora's regency (e.g. 853 as attested in Peter),[1439] I would argue for the later period of Michael III's reign, and the evidence is to be found in Michael's and, importantly, Patriarch Photios' religious policy. The collective evidence from Michael's sole reign suggests that the emperor championed the post-843 orthodoxy, even if it is difficult to assess how much of this was his own initiative.[1440] It was under Michael that aniconic seals were finally abandoned, and the bust of Christ adopted (fig. 42),[1441] unifying the symbolic design with that on the *nomismata*. Michael figures as the sponsor, if not initiator, of the earliest monumental image programme featuring representations of holy figures inside the crucial spaces of the palace complex – the Chrysotriklinos (the main throne room) and the Pharos church[1442] – and in Hagia Sophia.[1443] The surviving epigram describing the programme in the Chrysotriklinos celebrates the triumph over Iconoclast heresy and Emperor Michael 'whose deeds are filled with wisdom'.[1444] We do not know when this decoration was executed, but a date close to the renovation of the Pharos church (864) has been reasonable proposed on the analogy of a very similar image programme.[1445] Emperor Michael's prominent role in championing the orthodoxy to which Constantinople subscribed after 843 could also be related with his legacy. After all, he was the son of the last Iconoclast emperor, and may have been under additional pressure to dispel any doubts that he had no plans of reinstituting Iconoclasm. Mango correctly assessed that if there was any possibility of Iconoclast resurgence, it had to come from above. [1446] There is no evidence that Michael really entertained such an option, but it is possible that Patriarch Photios had his doubts, and, as we have seen, he may have expressed them even in the emperor's presence.[1447] Further evidence comes from Photios' homilies; the patriarch rarely missed an

[1439] An additional issue is that we know very little about the period of Theodora's regency, as the authors of surviving texts are eager to move to the bloody power-takeover in November 855 and the reign of Michael.
[1440] This is a general issue for Michael III's reign. He was indeed very young when assuming power, and even if revisionist scholarship rightfully rehabilitated emperor's image from Macedonian propaganda, consensus nowadays is that a lot of decision-making lied with other powerful figures, his uncle Bardas in the first place, PmbZ #4991. One of the more balanced works on Emperor Michael III is Kislinger 1987. See also Varona Codeso 2008, and Gallina 2010. Although it is beyond the scope of this note, I would argue that we have evidence that Michael was well-educated, and emperors with high education historically tend to be strong-minded and ideologically-conscious, as examples of Constantine V, Theophilos, and Leo VI suggest.
[1441] DOS6, 80–2, nos. 49.1–3.
[1442] Jenkins and Mango 1956, and Mango 1958, 177–83.
[1443] Mango and Hawkins 1965.
[1444] *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 106; ed. Beckby 1965, 170; tr. Mango 1986, 184.
[1445] See the *ekphrasis* by Photios, *Homilies*, §10, 100.31–103.18. For comparison, Der Nersessian 1951; Jenkins and Mango 1956, 140; Mango 1958, 183.
[1446] Mango 1977, 135.
[1447] See above, subheading, 'Absolution of Emperor Theophilos'.

opportunity to proclaim Michael the orthodox champion. The most detailed evidence, unsurprisingly, comes from homilies 17 and 18 both delivered in Hagia Sophia (see below for the occasions). Photios praises the emperor's zeal in defeating the Iconoclast heresy, emphasizes that it was the achievement of Michael's God-loving reign, and proclaims Michael the champion of piety and God's general.[1448] One exemplary passage from homily 18 must suffice by means of example:

> No manner of impiety shall henceforth speak freely. For our victorious protagonist [Michael III], using the writing pen like a spear forged by God, has struck the plague through the vitals. Now every kind of irreverence is lying prostrate, stripped of its very last hopes, and not even revived by dreams of a rebirth.[1449]

The disinterment and condemnation of Constantine V's remains would thus fit well with the surviving evidence of Michael's official religious policy. Importantly, the act would fit with Patriarch Photios' zealous anti-Iconoclast pursuit of institutionalizing restored orthodoxy. We have solid evidence that during 867, the patriarch intensified the anti-Iconoclast campaign, which culminated with the church council in Constantinople (August–September), conceived as sealing the triumph against all heresies, with Iconoclasm being at the forefront.[1450] Homilies 15 and 16 are part of a series of four or five homilies delivered during Lent, probably in 867,[1451] which, as Mango said, 'one might almost call a lecture course on ecclesiastical history'.[1452] The series seems to have dealt with all the heresies; in any case, the surviving homilies 15 and 16 focus on Arianism, primarily for the purpose of comparing it with Iconoclasm[1453] and preparing the grounds for the council. On Holy Saturday, 29 March 867, the image of the Virgin in the apse of Hagia Sophia was unveiled – the first monumental image inside Hagia Sophia after Iconoclasm – and Photios delivered a well-known homily (17).[1454] This is the most triumphant of Photios' homilies when it comes to the victory over Iconoclasm,[1455] in which he proclaimed: 'if one called this day the beginning and day of Orthodoxy (lest I say something excessive), one would not be far wrong'.[1456] The most important aspect for the present study

[1448] Photios, *Homilies*, §17, 166.18–31, 168.12–16, §18, 173.7–8, 175.29–176.3, 177.3–4, 177.22–178.1.
[1449] Photios, *Homilies*, §18, 176.27–31; tr. Mango 1958, 311.
[1450] Mango 1958, 297–306.
[1451] See the discussion with arguments based on the text, historic circumstances and manuscript evidence in favour of dating the two surviving sermons to February and March 867, Mango 1958, 20–4. Alternative dating is 861.
[1452] Mango 1958, 236.
[1453] Photios, Homilies, §§15–16. Mango 1958, 237–40.
[1454] Photios*, Homilies*, §17.
[1455] At one point, Ibid., §17, 170.21–4, Photios even argues for the primacy of the sense of sight over sound, thus for the superiority of images.
[1456] Ibid., §17, 168.10–11, Ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν εἴ τις ὀρθοδοξίας ἀρχὴν καὶ ἡμέραν, ἵνα μηδὲν ὑπέρογκον εἴπω, καλέσειεν, οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοι τοῦ δέοντος; tr. Mango 1958, 291.

is that this homily provides us with the earliest safely dated example of a public condemnation of Iconoclast rulers, proclaimed immediately after the proem:

> the cause of the celebration […] is the following: splendid piety erecting trophies against belief hostile to Christ; impiety lying low, stripped of her very last hopes; the ungodly ideas of those half-barbarous and bastard clans which had crept into the Roman government (who were an insult and a disgrace to the emperors) being exposed to everyone as an object of hatred and aversion. Yea, and as for us, beloved pair of pious Emperors, shining forth from the purple […] whose preoccupation is Orthodoxy rather than pride in the imperial diadem …[1457]

This statement was of course appropriate for the occasion on which it was proclaimed, but Photios had never mentioned any Iconoclast emperor before, nor made such strong statements, although he often engaged with Iconoclast arguments and defended the theology of icon-veneration.[1458] Moreover, if the humiliation of Constantine V's remains took place not long before the restoration of the Pharos church, as argued by Grierson, there is no indication of it in Photios' homily (10) delivered on the consecration of said church.[1459]

Accordingly, I would propose that the disinterment of Constantine V took place not long before homily 17 was delivered – and the line that the Iconoclast emperors were 'exposed to everyone as an object of hatred and aversion' may be a direct reference to it – or very soon after. That is, I propose the period between Bardas' assassination (21 April 866) and the 'Photian' council of Constantinople (August–September 867), as the likely dating for the disinterment and public humiliation of Emperor Constantine V, and possibly of John Grammatikos as well, who had already been condemned in Photios' homily 15 (February 867?). Considering the contradictions in our sources, this proposal remains hypothetical, but it has several advantages. First, the interpretation agrees with the presentation in the Logothete, and the evidence concerning the public condemnation of rulers present in Photios' homilies. It also fits with the historical circumstances; besides Photios' campaign, the period after Bardas' assassination was when Michael's and Photios' popularity dropped,[1460] leading to a revolt, and in the Logothete the episode of Constantine V's disinterment is preceded by the public humiliation of the two political opponents, Peganes and Symbatios.[1461] It would have probably been beneficial for Michael to distract attention away from the murder of his uncle Bardas, whilst at the same time demonstrating his orthodoxy.

[1457] Photios, *Homilies*, §17, 166.18–31; tr. Mango, 289.
[1458] See some examples in Photios, *Homilies*, §7, 74.10–14, 81.27–33; §12, 127.13–22; §§15–6, *passim*.
[1459] While on other occasions, e.g. Photios, Homilies, §7, 74.10–14, the patriarch celebrated the presence of holy images as a victory over Iconoclasm, such rhetoric is here missing, rather, Photios is exceptionally cautious of how he praises the image of Christ in the apse, Ibid., §10, 102.20–6.
[1460] Logothete A, ch. 131, 251.352–254.404. Mango 1958, 243.
[1461] Logothete A, ch. 131, 254.404–255.418.

The disinterment and humiliation of Constantine V's remains was probably the earliest public condemnation of an Iconoclast ruler. This macabre parody that aimed for maximum publicity was a spectacle of degradation, humiliation, execution, and banishment. The remains of Constantine V suffered the treatment reserved for tyrannical rulers and heretics; the act thus brought into public discourse, and expressed performatively, the message established and maintained in polemics during the previous c. sixty years. It was the complete opposite of the treatment afforded to the remains of Patriarch Nikephoros, and it begs for comparison; on the one hand, we have an Iconophile patriarch, a champion of orthodoxy, entering the church of the Holy Apostles to be buried as a saint; on the other we have an Iconoclast emperor, a heretic, exhumed from the same church and publicly condemned as an 'anti-saint'.

Conclusions

This thesis has attempted to throw new light on the reigns of the first two Isaurian rulers, Leo III and his son and heir, Constantine V – the authority they gained and wielded, and the imperial ideology they propagated – as well as their long-lasting legacy in the face of heavy opposition and systematic *damnatio memoriae*. It first revisited the evidence for the reigns of both emperors, outlining the aspects that made them figures admired by later emperors and the populace of at least Constantinople, if not the wider empire; it subsequently traced their highly-contested legacy in the c. one hundred years after Constantine V's death, and finally examined the lasting influence of their memory on Byzantine culture into the second half of the ninth century. In doing so I have sought to privilege hitherto neglected sources and offer new readings of ones that are better known, and thus offer a nuanced perception of these two seminal figures and their legacy.

I began by establishing Leo III's role in the successful defence of Constantinople, which raised his popularity among the citizens and seems to have contributed to the fact that he was able to repel any attempts to dethrone him. In the aftermath, the victory was propagated in diverse forms and media, most importantly through a commemorative ceremony in which Leo assumed the role of a new Moses, leading the citizens to salvation aided by the power of the cross. Leo also took the first step in leading his subjects 'out of the shadow of idolatry', and in bringing order 'under the light of the Law'. Leo's reign, thus, marked the end of the twenty-five years of anarchy; imperial authority, that had eroded during that period, began to recover. Constantine V was keen on maintaining his father's memory. He kept Leo's portrait on his coins and named his own son Leo, emphasising continuity. Leo was acclaimed by the Hiereia council (754) more than a decade after his death, his name was almost certainly invoked in the promulgations of additions to the *Ekloge* published under Constantine, and there is no reason to assume that the procession commemorating Leo's victory over the Arabs was not equally continued under Constantine. Constantine also expanded on Leo's policies: he managed to institute Iconoclasm as orthodoxy, for which he was acclaimed as saviour, and kept expanding the *Ekloge*. On the other hand, Constantine himself acquired an impressive list of achievements and considerable popularity over the course of his long reign. The campaigns against the Arabs brought sizeable loot to the military and transplanted portion of the population to support the building of new fortifications in Thrace. The incessant campaigning against the Bulgarians further secured the region and the achievements were celebrated with two triumphal entries into Constantinople, with magnificent displays of prisoners and booty. Constantine commenced the restoration of the vital edifices in Constantinople that had fallen into disrepair during the seventh and eighth centuries and the

pinnacle of his building achievements in Constantinople was the restoration of the aqueduct of Valens; this was celebrated as a display of the emperor's ability to muster a substantial workforce from across the empire and communicated to a wider audience through the legend of the emperor's slaying of a dragon. If Leo managed to initiate the restoration of eroded imperial authority, Constantine raised it to a higher level, achieving triumphs against external enemies and traitors, over idolatry, dominating church affairs, wrestling with lions and slaying a dragon. Still, their military achievements and the longevity of the two emperors were probably the most important aspects of the Isaurian legacy, because those factors led to the belief they were indeed blessed with divine grace. These then were also the primary achievements later rulers hoped to emulate, and that the Isaurians' enemies, such as the learned patriarch Nikephoros, struggled to deny, even when resorting to ingenious manipulations of their narratives (as we have seen).

Constantine's popularity seems to be the result of both his politics and genuine successes in spheres that were important to the population at large. He assumed a highly public profile, making himself visible, most notably at the Hippodrome, where he would even convene *silentia*, but in other venues too. He seems to have been preaching in preparation for the Hiereia council and led the procession to the Forum where the triumph over idolatry was proclaimed. His years on campaigns and military triumphs shared with his soldiers and amply advertised to the civic population, surely raised his popularity within the army, and especially among the elite units he had created. Moreover, the public humiliations, for which Constantine was condemned in polemical literature, sometimes called the 'Persecutor' (ὁ διώκτης),[1462] were clearly popular with the masses. Ultimately, regardless of their attitude towards the emperor himself, it is fair to say that the majority of Constantinopolitan citizens must have enjoyed the relative stability and prosperity of the last twenty-five years or so of Constantine V's reign. Constantine's memory was maintained through the epic tales told among the wider population and the army, especially the tagmata, and through figures close to the dynasty such as Theodotos Melissenos (who need not have been the only example). Moreover, the pattern of coins displaying the Isaurian dynasty featuring Leo III and Constantine V continued during Leo IV's brief reign, and for another decade or so during Eirene's regency over under-aged Constantine VI.[1463] Lastly, Constantine's five sons from his third marriage with Eudokia, whose legitimacy seems to have derived entirely from their father, played an important role in power-struggles well into the early ninth century.

[1462] Anonymous Chronographia, de Boor 1880, 225.5.
[1463] DOC3.1, pl. xii-xiii, nos. 1-7 (Leo IV), pl. xiii, nos. 1-2 (Constantine VI and Eirene).

The achievements of the Isaurian rulers were subsequently thrown into sharp relief in contrast with the less glorious reality of the period between 780 and 813, leading to a public *presbeia* to plea with Constantine V to rise from the dead. The combined political potential of the Isaurians being at once carriers of dynastic legitimacy, and the models whose success others wanted to emulate, and their popularity among the masses, manifested in the reinstitution of Iconoclasm. The exiled patriarch Nikephoros recognized the danger and responded with a series of texts against Iconoclast doctrine and especially, against the Iconoclast 'teacher' Constantine V. He thus handed to posterity the weapons with which to combat the foremost champion of Iconoclasm. In Constantinople, however, the positive memory and legacy of the Isaurian rulers received a second wind – besides their public recognition in the proclamation of the council in Hagia Sophia, the commemorations of the two rulers in the Holy Apostles may have been renewed, if they were ever discontinued – and remained largely undisturbed, at least until after the death of Emperor Theophilos. The situation in the following period is more difficult to assess. The notable silence on any of the Iconoclast rulers in public discourse may, in the first place, be due to Theophilos' family still being in power, or may have been a part of *damnatio memoriae*. Even if it was, the silence was broken in a spectacular fashion with the exhumation and condemnation of Constantine V's remains. This was the earliest recorded public condemnation of an Iconoclast ruler, and one of the most violent examples of enforcing the orthodoxy introduced in 843. The contribution of Nikephoros' invectives against Constantine V, which circulated independently of his other works, to the latter's public condemnation remains difficult to demonstrate but is a possibility worth considering, not least because of the symbolism behind Nikephoros' body entering and Constantine's body being exiled from the capital's second most important church. The patriarch at the time of condemnation, Photios, admired Nikephoros, and at least read the latter's chronicle.

Models (*exempla*), positive to emulate and negative to avoid, were a ubiquitous feature of discourse in Byzantium, and it is, finally, worth considering how the leading ecclesiastical figures worked through the models of Iconoclast rulers to influence the current emperors. Nikephoros wrote his invectives, not only to provide the Iconophile cause with weapons to contest Iconoclasm, but also to try to influence the current emperor, Leo V. I think we can see something similar in Photios' conduct, although in a different setting, when the patriarch proclaimed that:

> the ungodly ideas of those half-barbarous and bastard clans which had crept into the Roman government (who were an insult and a disgrace to the emperors) being exposed to everyone as an object of hatred and aversion. Yea, and as for us,

> beloved pair of pious Emperors, shining forth from the purple […] whose preoccupation is Orthodoxy rather than pride in the imperial diadem …[1464]

Although veiled in praise, these lines sound instructive, and Photios' condemnation of the Iconoclast rulers implied that these are certainly not the models any emperor should look to. In the next surviving homily, Photios delved into the importance of mimesis. Having made a positive example of the ecumenical councils, he addressed Emperor Michael III:

> As for you, champion of piety, what example have you taken in mind, in coming forward as the novel creator of this holy deed? What teacher have you found? To what leader have you referred yourself? What guide have you followed? Indeed it is evident that the common Lord and Creator of all has been your initiator in this mystery also …[1465]

Both statements are of course appropriate for the setting, but I believe even the second one is to an extent instructive. It is well established that Photios, in fact like Nikephoros, had both personal and political reasons for pursuing an anti-Iconoclast policy.[1466] Throughout his career, Photios worked hard to institutionalise the triumph over Iconoclasm, a process that concluded only during his second patriarchate with the Constantinopolitan council (879/80), when the second council of Nikaia in 787 was finally recognized as ecumenical.[1467] I think it is possible that, besides the political importance at the time, Photios' conduct was in part motivated by a fear of Iconoclasm's potential return. It is usually opined in scholarship that there was no threat of yet another renewal of Iconoclasm after 843. But this seems like a perception with hindsight; we now know that this was the end of Iconoclasm, but this was not necessarily the case for the ecclesiastical leaders at the time. Iconoclasm was a political at least as much as theological issue, serving in part the imposition of imperial authority. The fact that Emperor Leo V managed to reintroduce Iconoclasm in 815 with relative ease, even though the then patriarch Nikephoros was steadfastly opposed, meant that another emperor might attempt to do the same. Moreover, the emulation of the success of the Isaurians did not stop, even after Constantine V's public condemnation. As we have seen, Peter of Sicily may have found a template to praise Basil for defeating the heretics in a document originally celebrating Constantine V, and we find more telling evidence in the legal documents produced under Basil I. Comparing the rhetoric and ideology of Basil's legal programme,

[1464] Ibid., §17, 166.18–31; tr. Mango, 289.
[1465] Photios, *Homilies*, §18, 177.22–7, tr. Mango, 312 (slightly modified to remove the archaic language – e.g. thee, thou etc., I.M).
[1466] Mango 1977.
[1467] During the fifth session, Mansi XVII, 493–512.

Humphreys stressed that while the *Ekloge* was being discredited as a 'perversion of good laws', Basil's laws were in fact 'heavily modelled' on the *Ekloge*.[1468]

With this in mind, it is worth going back to the question of what pressures the Iconoclast past may have exerted on Michael III. Or rather, what might have been Photios' perception of this potential issue. Was there a fear that the appeal of the model might lead to emulation of the more destructive aspects associated with Constantine V – at least from the perspective of the patriarchate and perhaps parts of the elites. There is no evidence that Michael had any such plans; all the surviving evidence suggests that he championed the post-843 orthodoxy and the Christo-mimetic aspect of the imperial office. At least in public. But, within the space of the Great Palace complex, surrounded by companions who did not shy away from parodying patriarchal dignity,[1469] and with documents available that told a very different story about the 'famous' Isaurians, would not Constantine V still have been an appealing imperial figure?

[1468] Humphreys 2015, 245.
[1469] Theophilos 'Gryllos' PmbZ #8222.

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The abbreviations of scholarly works and periodicals follow the Dumbarton Oaks' List of Abbreviations used in Byzantine Publications, available at https://www.doaks.org/resources/publications/resources-for-authors-and-editors/list-of-abbreviations-used-in-byzantine-publications

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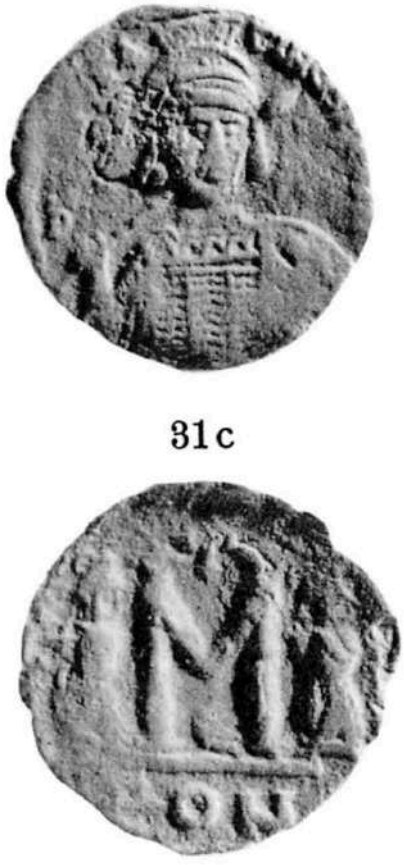

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Photo: Hector Williams
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